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GP RACING

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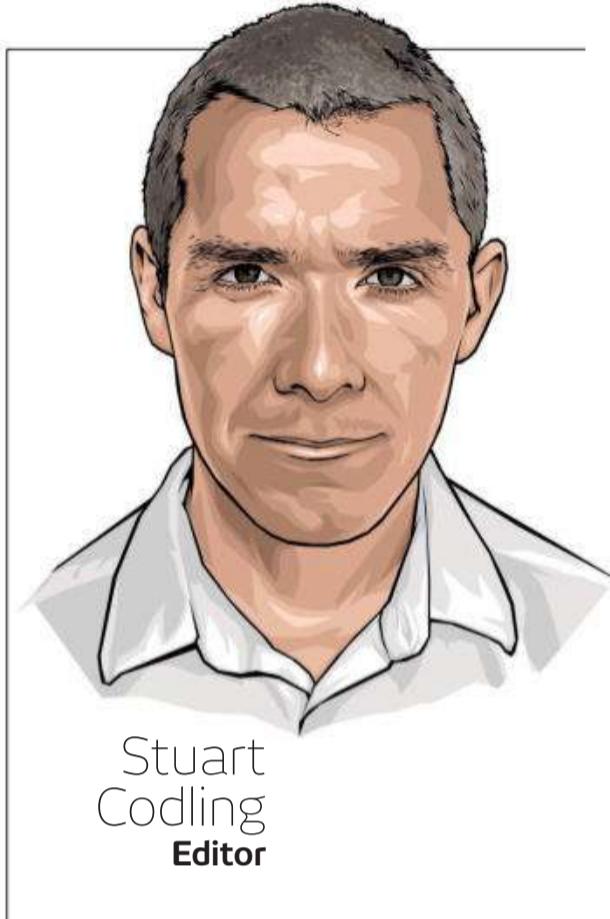
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Codling
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OLEG KARPOV

Oleg has had a busy time interviewing RB's Yuki Tsunoda (p58) and shadowing Gary Gannon, Nico Hülkenberg's race engineer (p76)



MATT YOUSON

Tom McCullough, Aston Martin's performance director, has revealed to Matt the challenges of setting a car up for Silverstone (p46)



DAMIEN SMITH

McLaren's last Honda-powered winner, the MP4/7 as used so well by Ayrton Senna, gets Damien's attention this month (p68)



JAMES ROBERTS

On top of his usual race report duties (p88), our former Associate editor asked F1 luminaries what makes Silverstone so good (p52)



Goodbye to supersizing? Not quite

Out there in the real world, on the Thursday before the Monaco Grand Prix, American documentary filmmaker Morgan Spurlock died from what were described as "complications related to cancer". Spurlock's most famous work is the 2004 doc *Super Size Me*, in which he exposed the fast-food industry's profit-driven push to encourage poor nutrition... by charting the effects on his own body of only eating at McDonald's and never turning down the ubiquitous offer to 'Super Size' each meal. Among those effects are lethargy, palpitations, depression and alarming weight gain.

Formula 1 has indubitably been lethargic in recognising, or at least addressing, the competitive issues wrought by the cars piling on the pounds in recent years. Getting them to hit the minimum weight limit has perhaps induced palpitations among the engineers – and the leaden effect of the super-sized machinery on the spectacle has been rather depressing, to say the least.

30 years ago the minimum weight of an F1 car was 515kg (albeit not including the driver). It's now 798kg, roughly analogous to the situation 100 years ago where grand prix cars had to observe a minimum of 650kg 'dry', plus two occupants. As noted above, getting a modern car to that limit is fraught with challenges, as evinced by the predominance of unpainted surfaces on the grid.

With that in mind, we should cautiously applaud the putative 2026 technical regulations (see p18) in which lower weight and improved agility were high

on the list of priorities. While much has been made of the width of the current cars, most recently and loudly after the processional Monaco race (by those who forget or are ignorant of the fact that this is by no means the widest generation of F1 machinery), narrowing them may help a little. What must be attacked is the weight, which makes them cumbersome and sluggish in changing direction.

So is a drop of 30kg really worth getting excited about, or is it just a case of fiddling around the margins? Certainly the work done so far is clever in terms of the solutions found to cut weight around the chassis without compromising safety, but much of the bloat remains – and is baked in thanks not only to the retention of the hybrid powertrain, but also the increase in battery size required to fulfil a separate commitment to rebalancing the contribution of combustion and electrical power in the performance mix. It's not cynical to view the chassis regs as essentially a fudge to accommodate the shortcomings of the power unit.

And since no less an eminence than F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali has been openly mulling a return to combustion-only, facilitated by sustainable fuels, perhaps this small step is just that – a grudging shuffle in the right direction.

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Team principals

Editor
Stuart Codling
Head of content
Mike Spinelli
Editorial director
Travis Okulski
Editor-in-chief
Rebecca Clancy

Drivers

Managing editor
Stewart Williams
Art editor
Frank Foster
International editor
Oleg Karpov

Pit crew

Principal photographer
Steven Tee
Photo agency
Motorsport Images

Advertising

Tandem Media
Director:
Richard Rowe –
richard@tandemmedia.co.uk
01233 228757
Account Manager:
Joel Tanton - joel@tandemmedia.co.uk
01233 228753

Subscriptions

Email: help@asm.secureorder.co.uk
Customer hotline/back issues
0344 848 8826
Subscriptions marketing executive
Matt Sleight



Australia



Poland

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A lot of people say current F1 cars look portly, inelegant and cumbersome. Perhaps they're just looking from the wrong angle. From above I think the current generation of cars have a certain elegance.

Since I was shooting for McLaren this weekend I had access to the team's hospitality suite overlooking Sainte Dévote. The main aim was to get a wider view of the race start but you can also go in tighter for a pan shot at a slow shutter speed that gives a real impression of the cars' pace as they pass beneath. So I went there during FP3 for that. This one of Lewis is the best of the bunch because of the smoke from his right-front tyre.



Photographer

Glenn Dunbar

Where Monte Carlo, Monaco

When 12:51pm, Saturday

25 May 2024

Details Canon EOS R3
100-500mm lens, 1/60th @ F9





And the Oscar goes to...

Another podium for a McLaren team that's very much on the up, and I'm happy that it happened on the weekend the entire crew (and cars) swapped to an Ayrton Senna-inspired colourway.

Apparently this was a year in the making, partly because of the implications of different paint on the weight of the cars.

This was an unusually stressful celebration shot to arrange. You'll see none of the engineers are present – they were on early flights out. And I was on one at 10pm! But we got it done despite this and the tightness of the pitlane. I thought it would be good to do it differently from the norm and have Oscar stand forward to become a focal point.



Photographer
Glenn Dunbar

Where Monte Carlo, Monaco

When 7:08pm, Sunday

26 May 2024

Details Canon EOS R3
14-35mm lens, 1/2000th @ F4





In the Nico time: staying off-grid

In among the hurly-burly of the pre-race grid business, there's always a brief window of time between the period the drivers spend in a huddle with their engineers and mechanics, confirming their plans for the race, and the immediate pre-race protocols such as the national anthem where the drivers stand together at the front of the grid. During that window many of them disappear – but to where?

Toilet break is one answer, and Nico Hülkenberg's engineer Gary Gannon alludes to it this month (see p76). But some just want a few moments away from the crowd to gather their thoughts. For Nico, racing here for the first time, that must have been especially important.



Photographer

Mark Sutton

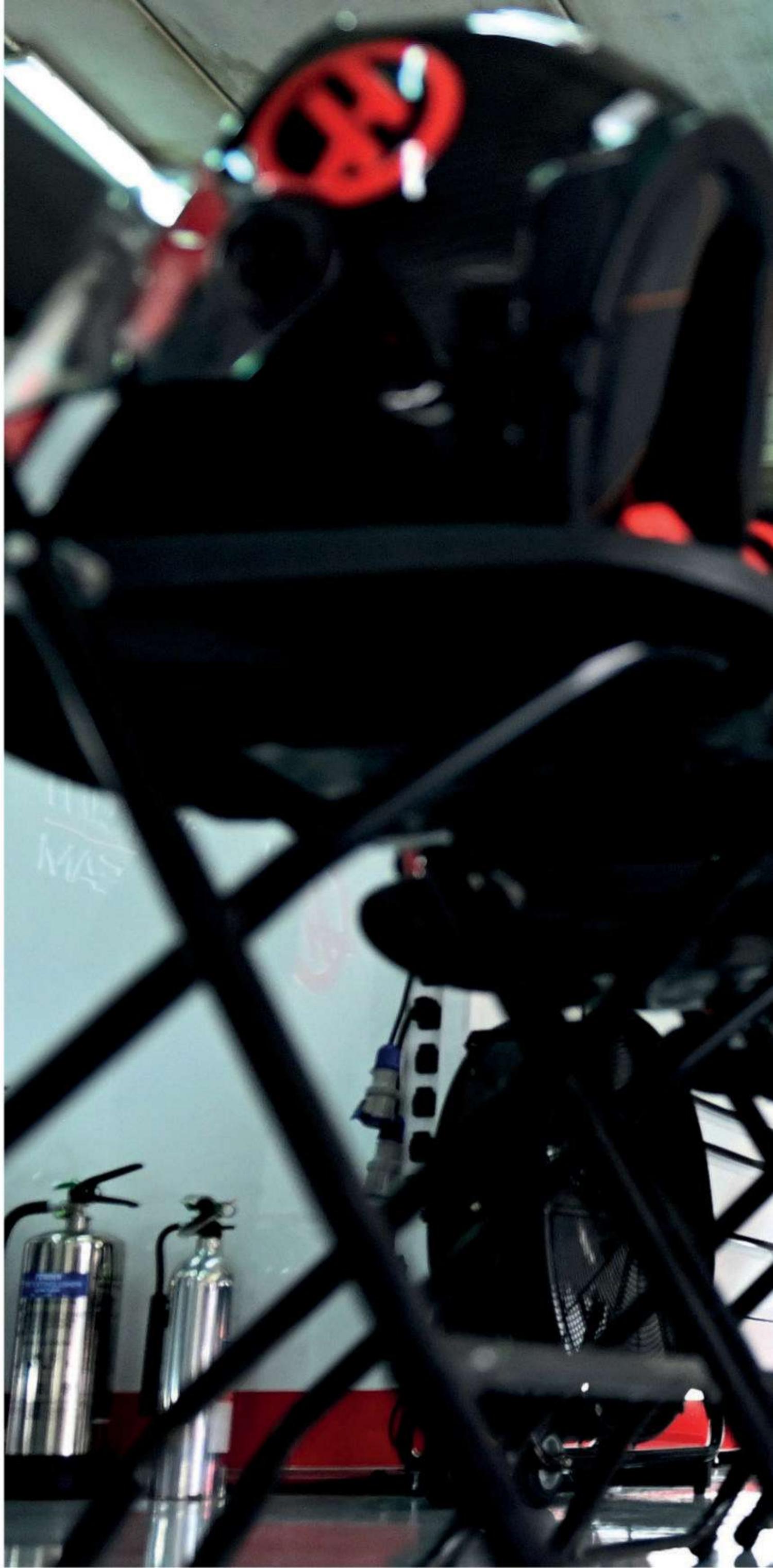
Where Imola, Italy

When 2:42pm, Sunday

19 May 2024

Details Nikon D6

24-70mm lens, 1/400th @ F2.8









The light at the start of the tunnel

'Iconic' is an often overused word but to me it perfectly captures the magic of Monaco and unique F1 circuit features such as the tunnel. The cars might not have muscular V10s or screaming V8s any more but even so, here in the tunnel, your senses come alive as they fly past. The noise is still enough for you to need ear protection

One of the challenges here is to capture the sense of speed as the cars blast through the tunnel. You have several different light sources to play with – and of course the natural light from the tunnel entrance and the artificial ones in the roof have different colour temperatures. When shooting at slow shutter speeds the trick is to keep the helmet sharp so it draws the eye into the photo.



Photographer
Zak Mauger

Where Monte Carlo, Monaco

When 1:20pm, Saturday

25 May 2024

Details Canon EOS R3
24-70mm lens, 1/13th @ F7.1





A beautiful drive in the country

Before it was a race circuit, and indeed before it became known as the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari, this track in the picturesque Emilia Romagna area of Italy was made up of public roads. As such there are many rather pretty buildings which were once, perhaps, roadside dwellings. The trees lining the road are also typical of this region.

I wanted to capture some of that ambience. Often the TV coverage of motor racing doesn't quite do that; you see the track, some fencing, some advertising boards. The only sense of scale comes from those helicopter shots at the beginning. It helps that the track sessions are now later to suit the US audience – you get a lovely quality of light at this time of the evening.



Photographer
Mark Sutton

Where Imola, Italy

When 5:08pm, Friday

17 May 2024

Details Nikon D6
24-70mm lens, 1/5300th @ F6.3



PICTURES © motorsport
IMAGES



01

X + Z = CONFUSION

Warnings over next-gen tech rules



2026 F1 CAR REVEAL PROMPTS NEW QUESTIONS

01

The FIA has released the first images of the new generation of F1 cars and backed it up with much more detail than before about how these cars will run. But while some areas have become clearer, many questions remain unanswered – and have been joined by some fresh ones as a consequence of the FIA's reveal.

The technical regulations have yet to be published and ratified, so what the FIA has shared with the world is more draft than definitive. But some fundamentals won't change.

It's been known for some time that the FIA is pushing for smaller and lighter cars, and now the dimensions have been confirmed: the wheelbase will be reduced by 200mm, the



PICTURES: FIA

width by 100mm, and the maximum floor width by 150mm. The 18-inch wheel size will be retained, but the wheels will be slightly narrower, by 25mm at the front and 30mm at the rear.

But it's not the size of the 2026 cars that has become a centrepiece of discussion – rather, it's the weight. There's no denying F1 would benefit from a diet since car weight has increased dramatically over the past 15 years. However, the stated reduction of 30kg seems ambitious – especially considering the new powertrains, which will rely on a greater

02

COURAGE UNDER FIRE

Pérez extends but must try harder



proportion of hybrid power, will almost certainly be heavier.

“I don’t think anyone will hit that weight target particularly,” warned Williams boss James Vowles, whose team still hasn’t met the target under the current regulations. “It’s going to be incredibly difficult, and that needs reviewing because as someone who spends their life going through marginal gains, taking weight out of a car, it’s not a fun thing to do.”

More concerns are being raised about the aerodynamics of the new cars. To compensate for some of the characteristics of the new power units, the FIA plans to significantly reduce the downforce – currently estimating a 30% cut – and drag. However, this will lead to significant changes in the way lap times are achieved. While it appears top speeds will increase – by some estimates quite dramatically – the new F1 cars will be significantly slower in the corners.

The cars will feature adjustable aerodynamic elements on both front and rear wings to reduce downforce on straights. This will also help to make more efficient use of the power available from the new engines and avoid the drastic scenario, raised by some teams last year, where drivers would be forced

03

ASIAN PERSUASION

F1 eyes new venues in the Far East



The FIA’s release of renders of a possible 2026 car has got the paddock talking, and it’s not all positive

to downshift on the straights to recharge their batteries.

With this change, F1 is set to enrich its vocabulary with two new terms: Z-mode and X-mode. The former would describe the state of the car at maximum downforce, the latter the low-drag configuration with both wings set to a minimum level.

All this will end the era of DRS as an overtaking tool. It’s going to be replaced by an ‘override’ engine mode that will allow the following car to use more power to give the driver a

chance to pass the car in front.

The override will allow the chasing car to continue using the maximum available power from MGU-K longer: the leading car’s power output will taper off after 290km/h, reaching zero at 355km/h, while the following car will benefit from 350kW up to 337km/h.

Sounds complicated? Well, that’s probably because it is – and that’s another concern about the next era of F1. There’s a

growing feeling in the paddock that some of the aspects of new regulations may confuse casual fans.

“I think it’s a lot of engineering language,” said Aston Martin team principal Mike Krack. “In terms of complexity, we need to focus on the product and the fans. I’m a bit scared that in 2026 we’ll have driver press conferences or driver interviews speaking about all these technicalities and a lot of people will not understand and lose interest because of that.”

Many of these complications are the result of F1’s push to introduce power units with a 50/50 split between internal combustion, which will run on synthetic fuel, and hybrid power. There remains a feeling in some circles that F1 will have to reckon with some unpleasant side-effects of this choice.

However, the PU regulations are already in place and the engine manufacturers have been working on their power units for the past two years. There isn’t much time left to finalise the chassis regulations either, with the first draft expected to be approved by the end of June. However, the FIA and the teams potentially still have six months to make a few changes before the final deadline at the beginning of 2025, when the teams will need to start working on their new cars. ►

WHY RED BULL RENEWED STRUGGLING PÉREZ

02

It's been more than a year since Sergio Pérez last won an F1 race, despite being part of the team which dominated the 2023 season and still has arguably the best car on the 2024 grid. Nevertheless, he's managed to convince Red Bull to extend his contract for another two years.

The lack of victories isn't the main reason Red Bull's choice might seem surprising – it's the fact that the team had a clear alternative in the form of Carlos Sainz. The Spaniard, dropped by Ferrari, was available, but Red Bull has decided that a driver whose two wins during Pérez's current winless streak came in a far less competitive car than Checo's wasn't appealing enough to put alongside Max Verstappen.

The stability of the team seems to be the key factor. In explaining the decision to keep Pérez, Christian Horner – via the team's press release – mentioned that the Mexican "has had a strong start to 2024". Even if this were not debatable, it could hardly be interpreted as the primary reason for the extension. In fact, Pérez had made an even stronger start to last season. In 2023 he already had two wins to his name before the start of the European leg of the championship, compared with just a handful of podiums this time around.

However, both then and now a significant drop in results awaited Pérez by the end of spring. And while last season's decline was attributed by Red Bull bosses to the pressure Checo put on himself to challenge Verstappen for the title, this year it appears the Mexican harboured no such expectations from the outset – yet the pattern has remained the same.



Canada (top) was another bad race for Pérez (above) but his contract had already been renewed. Ocon (below) has been dropped by Alpine



He began the season as an exemplary number two, consistently scoring points in the constructors' championship, but then picked up a measly four over three rounds at Imola, Monaco and Montréal. The last two races ended in crashes.

The fact Pérez appears to have given up the idea of seriously challenging Verstappen will probably have been the most important element in getting a new deal over the line. The arrival of a driver of Sainz's calibre could have destabilised the team's driver dynamic.

After extending Pérez's deal, Red Bull activated an option in Yuki Tsunoda's contract – the Japanese driver, who has made a strong start to the season, will remain with Red Bull's second team for at least another year. Tsunoda himself, however, has been increasingly vocal about his own ambition and desire to move up the F1 team ranks. Prior to the announcement of the extension with RB, Yuki's management had been in talks with other outfits; he was rumoured to be under serious consideration by Haas, and was on Audi's shortlist.

Another major piece of news from the transfer market is that at least one seat at Alpine is now guaranteed to be vacant. The team has announced the departure of Esteban Ocon at the end of this season. The news came after Monaco, where Ocon clashed with team-mate Pierre Gasly, but insiders suggest the decision had been made before that.

Not wanting to repeat the experience of 2019, when he was left without a seat in F1, Ocon began negotiations with other teams even before the final decision was made by Alpine. Meanwhile, the team's management will be in no hurry to finalise the 2025 line-up. ►

NEWS IN BRIEF... NEWS IN BRIEF...NEWS IN BRIEF...

RIP



PARNELLI JONES, winner of the 1963 Indianapolis 500 and an F1 entrant in the mid-1970s, had died aged 90. With Vel's Parnelli Jones Racing he entered F1 at the end of 1974, with Mario Andretti as his driver. Andretti's best finish was fourth in the 1975 Swedish GP but the team folded after three races of the 1976 season.

ENGINEER

The Stake (Sauber) team has added another experienced F1 engineer to its line-up, ahead of becoming the works Audi outfit in 2026. Former Red Bull and McLaren man Stefano Sordo will fill the newly created role of performance director at Hinwil.

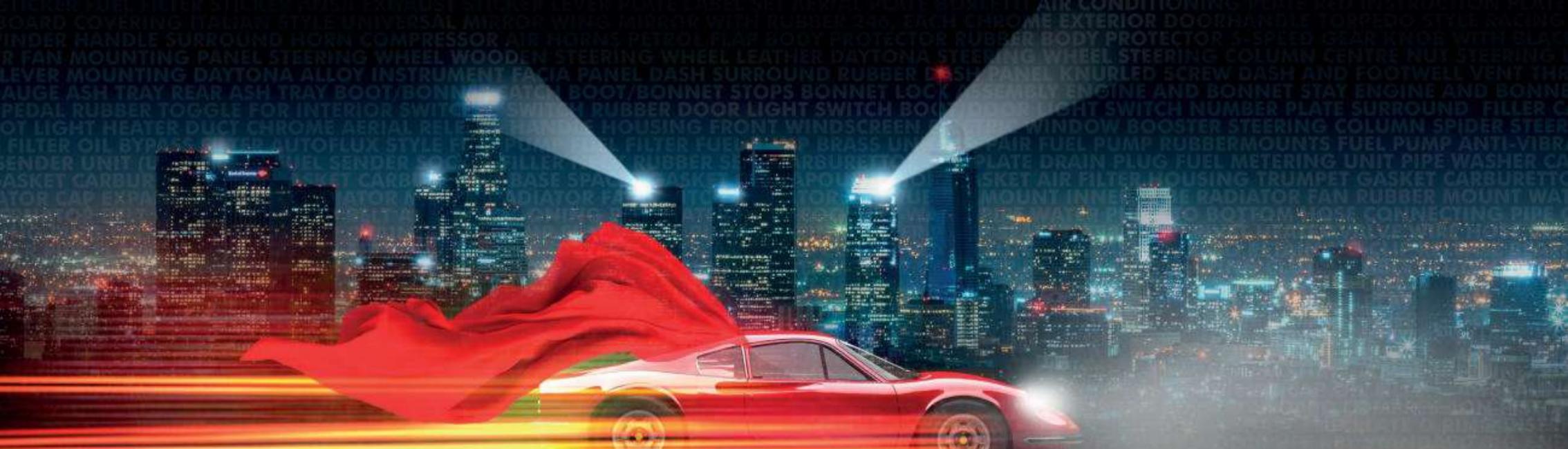
DRIVER

Jak Crawford, now part of the Aston Martin young driver line-up after leaving Red Bull's similar programme, has had his first taste of F1 machinery. The 19-year-old American, who is in his second season of F2, completed over 400km of dry running

at the Red Bull Ring on 5 June, using the team's 2022 car.

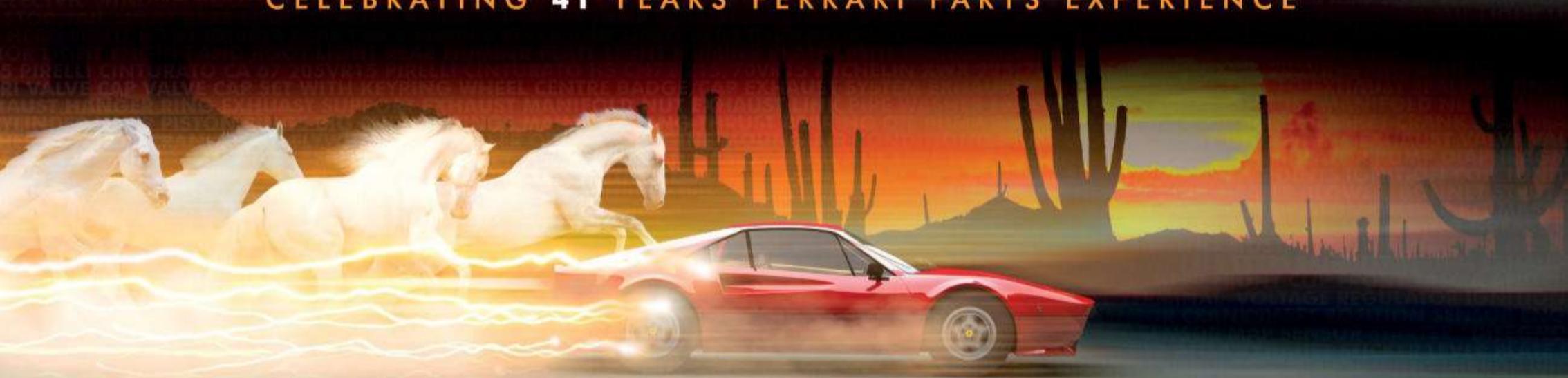
WET WEATHER

Ferrari, on behalf of the FIA, ran various wet-weather spray guards at Fiorano last month, but none of the configurations tested were deemed to have made a significant difference.



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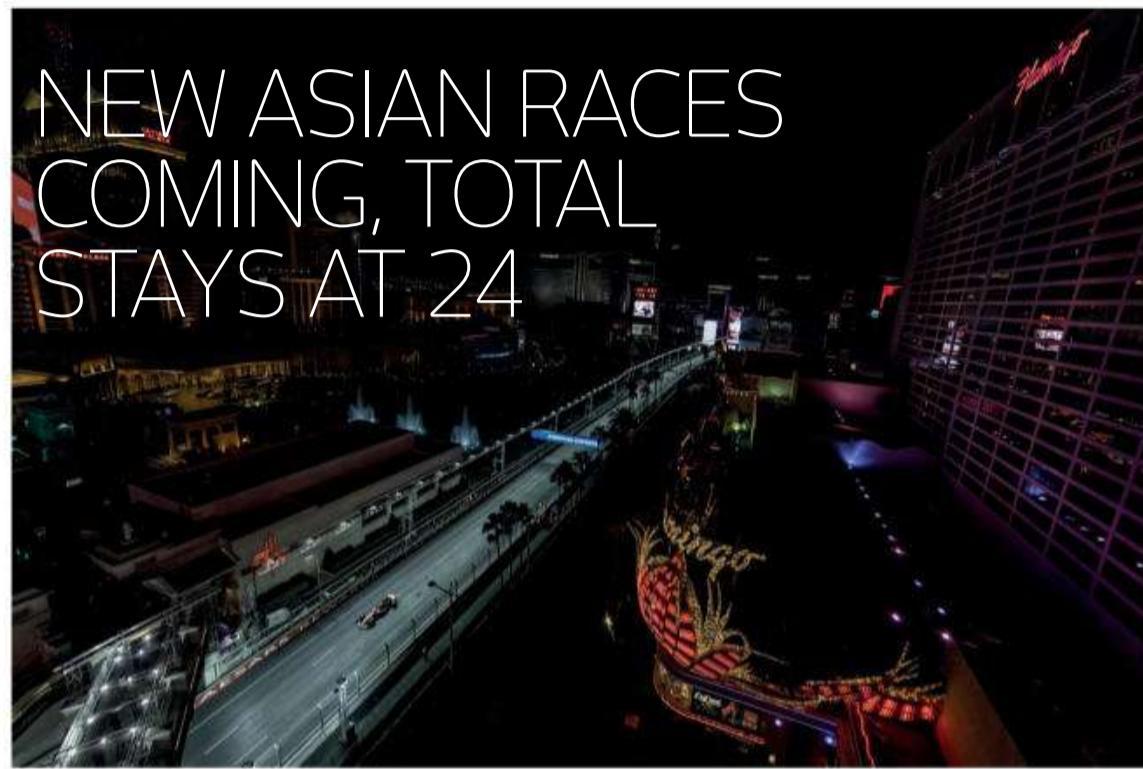


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03 **Formula 1 will set a record for** its longest-ever season this year with 24 races – and the championship's organisers have no intention of breaking said record, at least in the near future. According to Liberty Media, there are no plans to increase the number of races to 25, which had been one of the company's first stated goals after buying F1.

New rounds will only be added to the calendar to replace existing ones, despite growing interest in F1, particularly in Asian countries.

"We had a great race in China this year," said Liberty Media CEO Greg Maffei on the *James Allen on F1* podcast. "I think there's opportunity in Southeast Asia. We have interest from places like Thailand, and we have [contacts with] Indonesia and South Korea. Can we meet them all? No. Well, we're locked. We're not going above 24 races."

"That's set. We actually have the right to go to 25 in the Concorde Agreement, but I think there's a common agreement that 24 is where we're at. We're not going to go higher."

"So we're trying to think about – we have some great historical venues, how do we balance them against new fans? These are challenges – you know, everybody wants to have a race. That's the good news. Who can have a race that's exciting for fans, that helps grow the base, that is a great experience, that actually makes good money for the teams and us? That's a balance to try and think about where to grow."

Insiders suggest it's talks with Thailand which have been most productive. The Thai government is keen to see a race in Bangkok, and prime minister Srettha Thavisin was at Imola to discuss the plan with F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali. It's understood Red Bull, which has its roots in Thailand, is also keen to see the idea come to fruition. A street circuit project is under development, with the hope it could be added to the calendar in 2027/2028.

Among the venues most often mentioned as being under threat are Imola and Barcelona, which will host the Spanish GP for the last time this year before the race switches to Madrid.

After early teething problems the Las Vegas GP (above) was a success. Any new races will have to replace existing ones though, according to Greg Maffei (below)

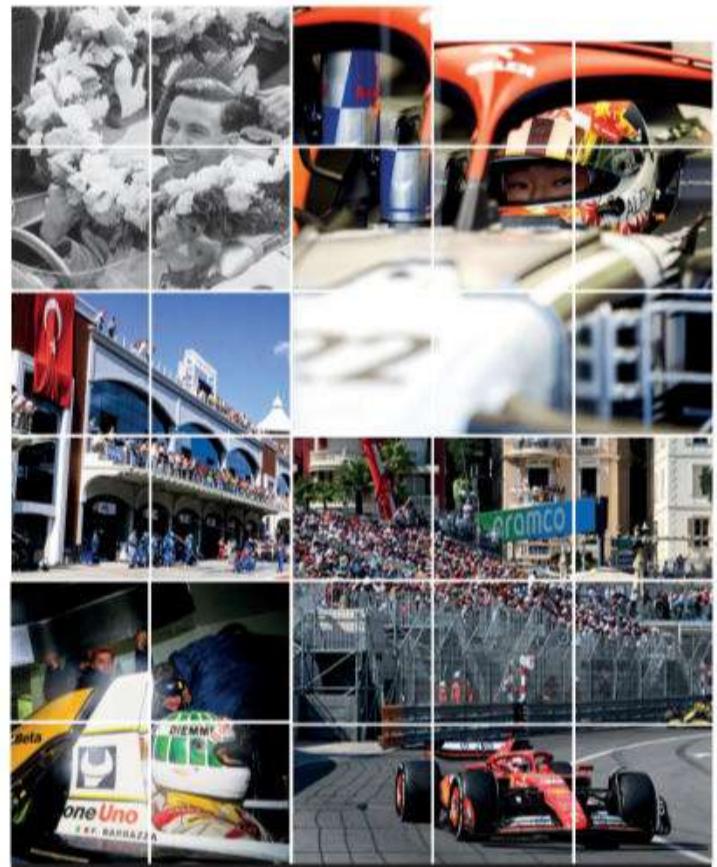


NEW ROUNDS WILL ONLY BE ADDED TO THE CALENDAR TO REPLACE EXISTING ONES, DESPITE GROWING INTEREST

F1 MASTERMIND

Your chosen specialised subject: the world's greatest motorsport

- Q1** Prior to 2024, when was the last time there has been four different winners in the first eight races?
- Q2** Monaco was Charles Leclerc's sixth Formula 1 win but how many of those have been from pole?
- Q3** How many cars have failed to be classified across the first nine races of 2024: 13, 18 or 21?
- Q4** Who is the only driver on the current grid to have won races for three different teams?
- Q5** True or false: Fabrizio Barbazza is one of only three drivers to score points for Minardi in more than one race?
- Q6** Who am I? I started 215 GPs from 2002 to 2013 for Minardi, Jaguar, Williams and Red Bull, winning nine times and claiming 13 pole positions.
- Q7** Yuki Tsunoda led a single GP last year. Which race was it and how many laps did he lead?
- Q8** Jim Clark won seven races in the 1963 season. Which driver broke that record of wins in a season and in which year?
- Q9** Who was the last British driver to win the British GP, before Lewis Hamilton?
- Q10** Who was the first driver to win the Turkish GP after failing to qualify on pole for the race?



1 2020 2 5 3 18 4 Fernando Alonso 5 True European and San Marino GPs 1993. Pierluigi Martini and Christian Fittipaldi are the others. 6 Mark Webber 7 Abu Dhabi, 5 8 Ayrton Senna 1988 9 David Coulthard 10 Lewis Hamilton (2009)

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REMEMBERING A BRITISH GRAND PRIX GREAT

The thrill of seeing a British driver going well at Silverstone is always special. New F1 winner Lando Norris achieved his first British Grand Prix podium last year as Lewis Hamilton took his 13th, just a few seconds behind. 70 years ago Stirling Moss was on target for a first home world championship podium in a truly competitive F1 car. The event proved fundamental to his future as one of the greatest motorsport drivers ever seen, a career which earned a knighthood and which recently was remembered at a poignant memorial at Westminster Abbey to celebrate his life.

F1 in 1954 was different yet the fundamentals of delivering results were much the same. 30 front-engined cars lined up on the Silverstone grid for a race that was due to last almost three hours with a variance in qualifying lap times in which the top 10 were separated by four seconds, far wider than the one-second gap from Max Verstappen to Pierre Gasly last year. Having narrower cars allowed four to line up side-by-side on the front row; perfect for Stirling having set the fourth-fastest time.

Moss was driving a Maserati 250F, an innovative car launched that season, but he wasn't a works



The memorial at Westminster Abbey celebrated the life of Moss, one of Britain's best racing drivers

driver. His attempts to deliver world championship results in British-built racing cars up to the end of 1953 had been impressive but frustrating. He had won prestigious sportscar events but needed to demonstrate his top-level single-seater skills so, when recommended by Mercedes team boss Alfred Neubauer to find a competitive Italian car, his business supporter went on the search.

It was a different time in F1 when a driver spending money to take a step forward was possible, yet Maserati had only two cars for sale and it was Stirling's obvious talent as well as his family's initial funding that made it happen. Thankfully, he was already working with brilliant mechanic and engineer Alf Francis; and when Alf switched the 250F onto Pirelli tyres at their first event in France, Moss loved the feel of the car.

Stirling's early season performance and his first world championship podium in Belgium encouraged Maserati to support him further going into the British GP. He was encouraged to use

higher engine revs and the manufacturer was happy to pay if anything went wrong. The works team also updated his car with a first gear that allowed Moss to snatch second place off the line to the Ferrari of José Froilán González at the start of the race. The second Ferrari team driver and fellow Brit Mike Hawthorn soon slipped past, as did works Merc driver Juan Manuel Fangio, but Moss stayed in the game. When Fangio took second from Hawthorn, the 90,000 Silverstone spectators were engrossed in a new battle for third between their national heroes. Both future superstars swapped positions at one third distance until Moss used the extra revs to ease away.

Stirling was now catching the driver who was heading towards the second of four career world titles. Fangio's Mercedes was using fully streamlined bodywork that covered the wheels, an aspect allowed in the rules but which was proving to be a challenge for corner accuracy at Silverstone. On lap 55 out of 90 Moss passed his future team-mate to take second place, clearly spotted by the fans but also by the Mercedes boss. Stirling was well positioned and set fastest lap but he wasn't the only driver to do so. Timing at Silverstone was recorded to a rounded second rather than to a tenth or a hundredth – and in

that race no fewer than seven drivers set a lap at 1m 50s. If the same system had been in place last year, Verstappen's fastest lap would have been matched by seven others.

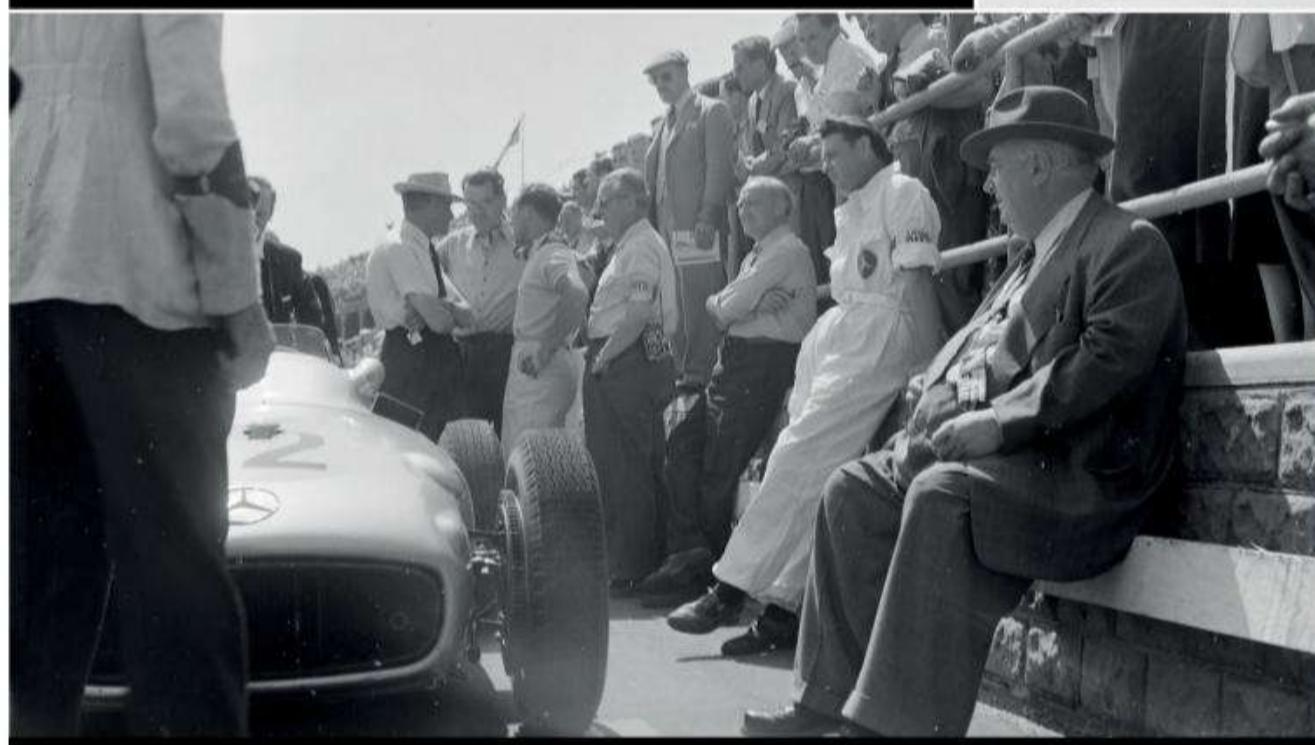
With 10 laps to go, Stirling's hopes of a podium disappeared; the Maserati suffered a rare transmission failure and he was out. His race had ended too soon and reliability issues were common: half of the starters failed to make the chequered flag. Compare this with this year's season opener – all cars finished in Bahrain. Moss had been able to run strongly for nearly 90% of the race and it gave him a new level of respect from the team bosses. His Silverstone heroics were backed up at Monza where he led for 19 laps before an engine failure required him to push his own car across the line for 10th. Maserati thought it would have him as a factory driver for the following year but Alfred Neubauer offered him a deal at Mercedes that was even more tempting.

Moss took his first world championship win with Mercedes at Aintree in 1955 and therefore was the first home winner of a British GP. He won a further 15 times with different cars over the next six years, missing out on several titles by the narrowest of margins. In 1962 he was due to race a Ferrari in F1, but an accident at Goodwood in a Lotus ended his racing career. He was a winner in road racing and rallying, a star in sportscars and single seaters. An all-rounder of breathtaking talent and Silverstone was a key part of his racing life, though he never won the British GP there.



Brits doing well at the British GP: Norris claimed his home podium at Silverstone last year, alongside Hamilton

After buying a 250F on Neubauer's recommendations, Moss took his first F1 podium in the 1954 Belgian GP, his first championship race with the car



Mercedes boss Alfred Neubauer, instrumental in pushing Moss's F1 career forward, looks on as Stirling chats during the 1955 British GP meeting. Neubauer had snatched Moss away from a Maserati drive

Sir Jackie Stewart gave a personal tribute to his fellow knight at the recent memorial



Moss was set for third in the 1954 British GP at Silverstone before suffering transmission issues



Moss became the first British winner of the British GP when he triumphed at Aintree in 1955, ahead of Juan Manuel Fangio





UNDER THE HOOD

PAT SYMONDS

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MONTE CARLO OR BUST: TACTICS VS STRATEGY

For many the 1982 Austrian Grand Prix will be remembered for the incredibly close finish as Elio de Angelis's Lotus claimed victory from the Williams of Keke Rosberg by just 0.05 seconds. For me, however, the outstanding memory was being in the pitlane as Nelson Piquet came in for what was the first planned pitstop for tyres and fuel of the modern era.

I was with Toleman at the time and although both our cars retired early, I'd stayed on the pitwall to watch the race unfold. In those days there was no pitlane speed limit and the velocity at which the car entered the pits was staggering. The stop itself took around 25 seconds, ten times today's standard.

It was the start of a new way of thinking about how to execute a race and, although refuelling was banned for a while in 1984, the die was set and the understanding that a grand prix did not have to be non-stop was embedded.

In 1994, when refuelling was re-introduced, teams started to think about the subject in a more mathematical way and the concept generally known



When refuelling returned to F1 in 1994, teams began to look at its use mathematically and so race strategy was effectively created

as race strategy was born. In those early days the software essentially worked on minimising race time, taking into account that the less fuel was in a car, the faster it would lap – while conversely the older the tyres were, the slower the lap would be.

These simulations were what are called deterministic. In other words, one set of conditions was imposed, and one outcome was determined. The conditions would be the effect of fuel load on lap time, the loss of lap time as the tyres degraded, and the actual stop laps and stop times.

This was helpful but, while minimising race time

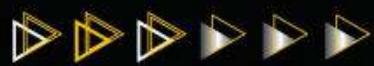
was an obvious objective, a less obvious one was that track position at critical times of the race was often more important. I always say that the objective is not to complete a race in the quickest possible time but to win it in the slowest possible time. This leads to the concept of the importance of track position and an understanding of when the driver needs to be driving at their maximum and when tyre and fuel conservation are more important. It also means that the probability of overtaking another car at any point in the race needs to be introduced.

This led to software based on a well-known statistical technique called 'Monte Carlo' simulation being required. The technique has nothing to do with the Monaco Grand Prix but is a technique

developed in the 1940s to lead experimental work in many fields. A Monte Carlo simulation runs many times, varying the inputs to the model within bounds set by the programmer. Each time it calculates a result and then, when the process is finished, determines which inputs are most likely to give the most favourable result. Such a simulation is called stochastic since it doesn't provide a singular answer but instead gives a probability distribution of outcomes.

Such a technique now leads to the possibility to expand strategy to a much more generalised meaning. For example, the software would obviously show that fast pitstops are required and hence investment in pitstop equipment will be rewarded. Perhaps slightly less obvious is investigating the effect of downforce. Physics-based simulations will determine the best wing settings for optimum lap time but are these the best for racing? Strategy software might find that a lower-drag setup may be slightly slower but give a better race result due to enhanced overtaking opportunities. This then means that wings with the right level of downforce and drag must be designed, tested and manufactured in time to be available at the race. This is the true meaning of strategy – a plan to achieve long-term goals.

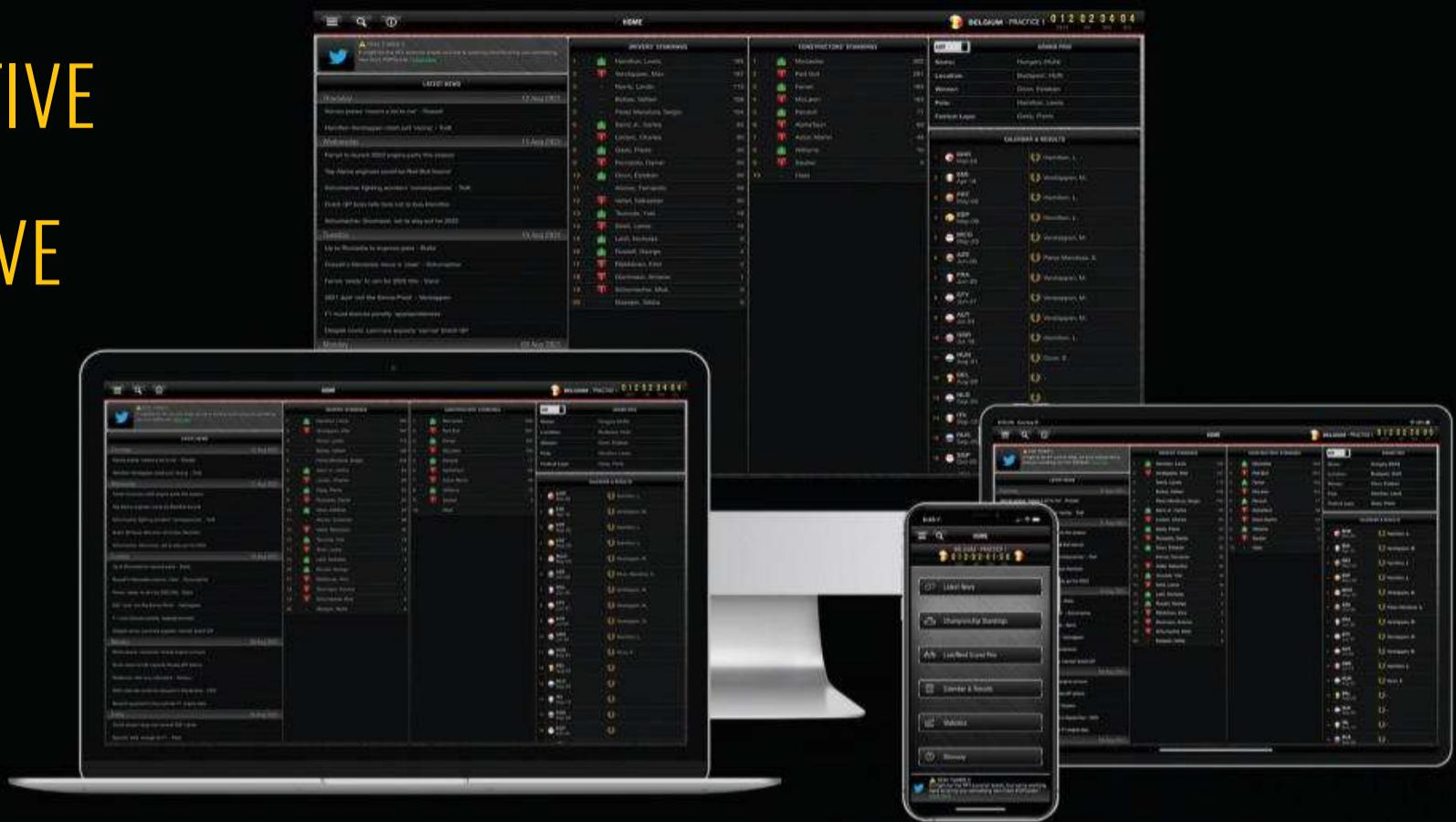
During the race weekend the teams work in a much more tactical way. Firstly they use free practice to refine the numbers they've been using for tyre degradation and relative performance of their cars. The multiple simulations are then re-run to find the best approach to achieving success on race day. ►



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At the 2019 Singapore GP Ferrari employed the unusual strategy of pitting Sebastian Vettel very early from third place. The move worked well and German won the race



Tyre degradation, on their cars and the rest of the field, is one of the major factors that teams have to try and map into a race strategy



The timing of modern pitstops is a crucial tactic that teams use when, depending on the circuit, they pit a car to try the undercut or overcut

They will also be introducing a new factor into their simulations using a technique known as game theory. This uses mathematical techniques to look at strategic interactions between the teams and how to react to the many conflicts of interest that exist in determining the best tactical approach to the race. For example, if tyre degradation is high then the undercut, the action of making a pitstop before your competitor, becomes powerful for gaining track position. However, if you try to anticipate this, your competitor may also anticipate it – so how do you deal with this? The answer may be to stop even earlier or to do the opposite and try and conserve tyre life early on with the intention of stretching the first stint. The software will help you decide.

Of course, as you get into the race itself

some of the variables become constants. Tyre degradation is now determined in real time from both your cars and those of your competitors. You may get an idea of degradation on other compounds as well. You will also know your true position and who you're really racing, and even see what the overtaking possibilities are. This leads to continual re-running of the simulations to give tactical awareness not just of the race as it

YOU WILL ALSO KNOW YOUR TRUE POSITION AND WHO YOU'RE REALLY RACING, AND EVEN SEE WHAT THE OVERTAKING POSSIBILITIES ARE

is panning out, but also to guide what to do in the case of a virtual or physical Safety Car intervention.

All of this leads to a need for powerful computation. The tens of simulations of the 1990s became tens of thousands by 2005 and millions by the end of the last decade. The next step will undoubtedly be the application of machine learning to better understand how your rivals may act and how best to react to their actions.

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TIME FOR RED BULL TO GO BACK TO BASICS

It's late 2004 and I'm sitting across the aisle from Dietrich Mateschitz in the cabin of his Falcon jet as we wing our way to Madrid for a meeting with Repsol. Long-time Austrian Formula 1 journalist Gerhard Kuntschik sits opposite the man who has built Red Bull into a global phenomenon.

Gerhard is interviewing Mateschitz for the Salzburger Nachrichten. Salzburg lies 25km from Red Bull's HQ in Fuschl am See, while its airport is home to the recently opened Red Bull Hangar 7, one of Mateschitz's extraordinary creations.

At the rear of the cabin sits a grumpy-looking Dany Bahar, one of the executives Mateschitz has charged with developing the company's F1 programme following its takeover of Jaguar Racing. Christian Horner is two months away from being made team principal, Adrian Newey isn't even a twinkle in Red Bull's eye.

He, like many, is probably wondering what an energy drinks company will make of owning an F1 team. The conversation turns to other teams and Jordan Grand Prix is mentioned. My former team



Newey's departure from Red Bull is a surprise, but Jordan's involvement as his manager is the bigger shock...

is clearly in decline. I confirm that while Eddie Jordan had been great to work for, running an independent team when up against manufacturer-backed rivals was a sometimes-thankless task.

"Jordan's done very well, if we achieve even part of what he has done I'll be happy," corrects Mateschitz. "Winning grands prix is the objective, and he's done that with a small team."

I thought about this conversation when I read the news that Adrian Newey was leaving Red Bull Racing. If few anticipated the departure of



media circus, but his response was clear.

"I don't stand in front of my brand. Red Bull comes first, that's the only thing I want the media to talk about. I don't like normal advertising, it's a waste. I prefer to create events that generate positive media coverage and make people want to try Red Bull."

Not for Mateschitz the narcissism of a Richard Branson or Elon Musk who conflate their personality with the brands they own and run. The Austrian held strong beliefs about his company, its values, and the fact that Red Bull is bigger than any individual. He included himself in that.

Formula 1's greatest technical director, no one saw Eddie Jordan diving back into the Piranha Club as Newey's manager.

Eighteen months after Mateschitz lost his life to pancreatic cancer, it's a strange twist of fate that the former team owner whom he respected has helped to extract Newey from Red Bull's grasp. There has been much comment about it, of course; one delightful follower of mine on X wondered what F1's 'class clown' could possibly bring to Newey's negotiations.

Time to remind the legions of newly arrived fans that EJ not only founded and ran an F1 team which survived, thrived, won grands prix, challenged the best and made him a very wealthy man in the process, but that it continues to this day as Aston Martin. He has had the last laugh and is enjoying being in the midst of this year's biggest story.

You have to wonder what Mateschitz would have made of it all. I strongly suspect that any turmoil at Red Bull Racing would have been quickly nipped in the bud.

Kuntschik's mid-air interview with the Red Bull boss was something of a departure, for the media spotlight was one thing

Mateschitz tended to avoid. I once asked him about this, given that F1 is nothing if not a

THIS MONTH

Renee Wilm

Chief Executive Officer, Las Vegas Grand Prix, Inc

From leading the acquisition of Formula 1 by Liberty Media to running the Las Vegas Grand Prix, Renee Wilm's legal background has been instrumental in bringing together stakeholders as disparate as county commissioners and hotel owners to make the race along the iconic Strip viable. Read her plans for year two...



GP Racing: You've been involved with the Las Vegas race since the start, but also with Liberty Media. Tell us about the work you do...

INTERVIEW
JAMES
ROBERTS

2022-present

Chief Executive Officer, Las Vegas Grand Prix, Inc

2019-present

Chief Legal Officer and Chief Administrative Officer, Liberty Media, Qurate Retail, Liberty Broadband, Liberty TripAdvisor

2017-2019

Senior Partner, Baker Botts LLP

1997-2016

Partner; Associate; Law Clerk, Baker Botts LLP

Renee Wilm: I'm a deal lawyer by training and I've been working with the John Malone group of companies since the 1990s. I've been fortunate to work on the big transactions we've done at Liberty Media and, as you can imagine, deals with SiriusXM, Atlanta Braves and DirecTV are always complex and challenging. In 2016 I flew to London as we were looking at Formula 1. I led that transaction, I remember we raised money through many different methods and it was one of the most complicated closing days I've ever experienced. We were excited about the acquisition and saw a tremendous opportunity, particularly in the United States. Shortly thereafter I was brought in-house as the chief legal officer.

GPR: So then how did you come to work with the Las Vegas Grand Prix?

RW: It was during Covid and [F1 CEO] Chase Carey really wanted a Las Vegas race up-and-running. I went over to Vegas to help out and started to get meetings going with the county commissioners and our founding partners. We started to generate a lot of excitement since there was an interest in bringing more international tourism post-Covid and to help make the city the sports entertainment capital of the world. Previously the slogan was 'what happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas' and that's changed to 'what happens in Vegas, *only* happens in Vegas.'

GPR: What was the impact locally of the first race that was held last November?

RW: One of the reasons we picked the week we did, because it was the lowest-grossing week for Las Vegas in the year. So we figured if we're going to shut down the Strip and surrounding roads let's do it on the weekend that would cause the least disruption. Unfortunately due to the amount

of repaving required, there was a lot of traffic disruption throughout the year – more than anyone expected. But that work won't be needed this year. Secondly we generated \$1.5bn in the overall economic impact and that breaks down into \$77m of tax revenue.

Of that amount, \$22m went to support education, so we were extremely happy with what we were able to give back to the community. We also created a tremendous number of jobs and now we have Grand Prix Plaza – the 39 acres of land we purchased in the city that houses the F1 pit building – which is going to be our year-round activation after this year's race.

GPR: What have been the learnings of the first year of the actual event, from the opening night to the track issues, to the spectator experience?

RW: We learned so much, as we had no playbook for what we embarked upon. We got a lot of things right and the race itself was spectacular. I also think our fan experience was exceptional. We leaned in on top-notch talent and entertainment and our Sphere Zone was a three-day party. So much went incredibly well, but there was a lot of challenges we encountered. There was the time zone issue for one. For 2024, we have moved the practice and qualifying sessions by two hours. We kept the race start time because we still have our European fan base who can watch with a cup of coffee.

GPR: What other changes might we see for the second year?

RW: In year one we leaned in heavily on our VIP secondary hospitality, having seen the success it had in Miami. We had a number of structures geared towards that B2B market. The feedback we received is that a broader variety of our fans want to come to the side of the track and watch the race, so we've eliminated those structures in favour of 10,000 new general admission tickets, which will include grandstand bench seating and access to the Fan Zones.



HOW TO UNRAVEL TRAVEL



Szafnauer has used the break from hands-on F1 work to help launch the logistics app

While he's 'between jobs' in Formula 1, former Aston Martin and Alpine team principal Otmar Szafnauer has launched an app which aims to take the pain out of transporting large groups of people around the world...

Many people complain about being busy when in fact the opposite can be rather ghastlier. Little wonder, then, that Otmar Szafnauer has embarked on a new business venture while serving a contractual "non-compete" period after his Alpine departure last summer.

That project is EventR, a logistics app designed to simplify the process of ushering racing teams to their destinations and back again (though it could just as easily be used to corral those attending a stag do, for instance). Many businesses in the F1 world still rely on multi-page spreadsheets to ensure everyone arrives at the right place at the right time and has accommodation – and a place in a hire car.

This isn't the first time Szafnauer has gone digital while his F1 management career has been on hiatus. After becoming one of the many casualties of Honda's sudden-onset withdrawal from F1 at the end of 2008, he co-founded Soft Pauer, a 'digital solutions provider' whose first product was a timing app for Formula 1, launched on iOS in mid-2009. Although this was later superseded by Formula One Management's own in-house production (Liberty Media wanted to consolidate its digital operations into one organisation), the original app featured at the global launch of the iPad in January 2010, when Steve Jobs set the world a-flutter.

Remember those heady days? "Last time there was this much excitement about a tablet," wrote the Wall Street Journal, "it had some commandments on it."

"We developed the app when it was just the iPhone," says Szafnauer. "The iPad didn't exist yet. When the iPad came out, if you remember, Steve Jobs used to do a big keynote speech whenever there was a big product announcement. He chose 13 apps to demonstrate and we were one of them."

"I'd realised the information we had available to us on the pitwall would really improve the fan experience, and the means existed to transmit that information."

"That was back then. And now another year off – hopefully a year, we'll see what happens – and this is another app we've done in between working for F1 teams. It's a bit F1-specific now but it can also be used

WORDS
STUART
COOLING



With 24 races, travel is becoming increasingly more complex for F1 teams to administer

for other things. It's sort of a continuation of other technologies we've been doing in the background, such as the Paddock Club app – some teams approached us wanting something which would enable them to do away with paper itineraries and that sort of thing.

"We're working with Visa Cash App RB and a couple of F2 teams, and having conversations with others. Some are using in-house stuff – I had to point out they shouldn't really be wasting their precious IT and coding resources on this kind of stuff, they should be using that to make their cars go faster. And some members of the public have written to us, saying they use it."

While the app's remit of simplifying complex logistics can be scaled down to an individual level, enabling people to manage travel arrangements around large family holidays or weddings, for instance, it can also be useful to enterprises adjacent to motor racing – or indeed any industry where many people travel.

"I've been in Abu Dhabi to help with the introduction of the fact that Muse will be playing there [after the grand prix on 8 December]," says Szafnauer, "and I met the president of Live Nation for the Middle East. He was very interested because they manage about 500 acts. If you're a band and you have, say, 100 people travelling with you for different events to manage the lighting and



The app allows teams to manage travel without the use of spreadsheets

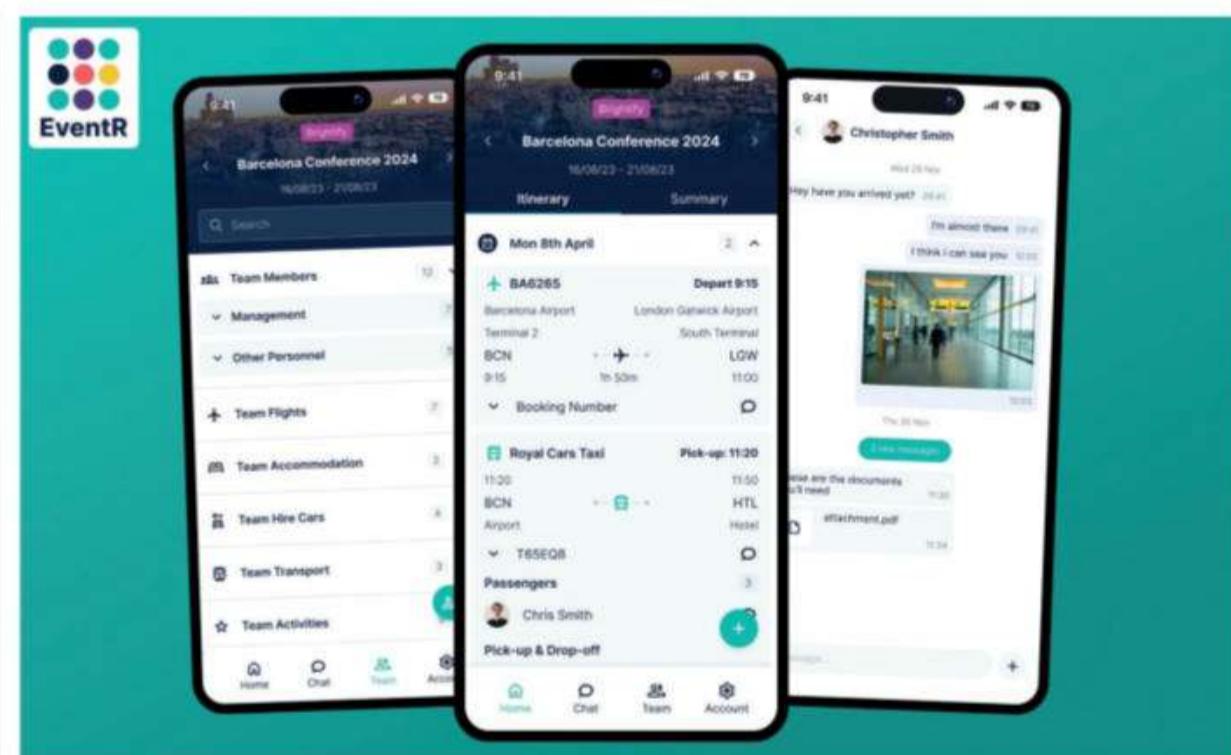
sound, it's very useful for that too."

As well as managing and consolidating individual itineraries into one easily viewable area, the app offers extra features including a chat function, and a 'coordinator hub' with costing and budgeting tools. There's also a VIP platform which enables users to plan single or multi-day hospitality events with a level of granular detail including check-in management, gifts and individual dietary requirements.

"Most teams we've spoken to have at least two people managing logistics full-time," says Soft Pauer CEO Alex Powell. "You have to be prepared for plans to change on the hoof – flights get cancelled and F1 often faces force majeure events such as typhoons. This app came out of the Covid era, where the FIA mandated they wanted to know where all the team members were."

"One of the original use cases was to resolve the question of whether you could do social distancing and track where everyone was, travelling in 'bubbles', and working out who had come into contact with whom. As Covid became more understood and restrictions eased, the need for that reduced, but having that ability to organise and track logistics at that micro level was still interesting and useful."

There are several features still at the planning stage,



such as to-do lists and means of connecting users with professional services (from restaurants to marquee hire). But since digital products evolve iteratively, once a big enough user base is installed then its needs and wants will begin to steer development.

"We've done the 1% inspiration," says Powell. "Now we're on to the 99% perspiration..."



SILVERSTONE PREVIEW

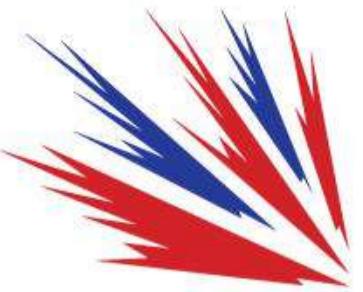
LEWIS HAMILTON'S GREATEST BRITISH GP HITS

He's won his home race a record eight times – but Lewis Hamilton was making his name among the Silverstone faithful even before he'd driven an F1 car in anger. Here, with a little help from those who know him best, we've named four of his feistiest British Grand Prix weekends...

WORDS STUART COOLING PICTURES







SILVERSTONE PREVIEW



10-11 June 2006
GP2 Series

The mainstream audience was several months out from learning Lewis Hamilton's name. But those attending the 2006 British Grand Prix got a taste of what was surely coming to Formula 1. After several years of dominance by Ferrari and Michael Schumacher, ticket sales had been on the wane and many in the crowd had at least one eye on footballing matters in Germany where, on the Saturday, England faced Paraguay in the first Group B game of the FIFA World Cup.

"Genius" was how our sister magazine *Autosport* described Lewis's outstanding drives in the two GP2 Series races which formed the top of the supporting programme at Silverstone that year. "On a weekend when World Cup fever swept across the home of British motor racing, his dominance put the focus firmly back on the track and was further proof that here is a star in the making."

In the longer feature race on Saturday, Lewis started alongside fellow Brit Adam Carroll on the front row, seized the lead from the polesitter at Copse – the first corner in those days – and remained in front despite three Safety Car periods, crossing the line 5s ahead of Timo Glock. It was a performance that would linger longer in the



memory than England squeaking past Paraguay courtesy of a Carlos Gamarra own goal.

But it was Sunday's sprint race which inked Lewis in as a bona fide future star. Since the first eight grid spots were determined by reversing the top eight finishers in the feature race, Lewis had to fight his way through from eighth – with championship nemesis Nelson Piquet Jr fifth.

Lewis had the benefit of some luck – gearbox issues for third-placed Alexandre Prémat and seventh-placed Glock meant he gained two

places before dicing for fifth with Carroll throughout the opening lap. Giorgio Pantano was tougher to break but Lewis made the better restart after a Safety Car period to seize fourth.

All that lay ahead was polesitter Felix Porteiro, aided in his bid to cling on to the lead by the frenzied battle for second between Clivio Piccione and Piquet. The Brazilian drew alongside through Copse – but Hamilton slipstreamed beautifully to get a tow from each car. They went three-wide into the right-hander at Maggotts and Hamilton



In the first GP2 race Lewis took the lead on the first lap and coped with three Safety Cars to win by five second (left)

In the second race he fought his way through from eighth on the grid to claim a Silverstone double (above)

swept into second, passing both in one move. As a bonus, Piquet briefly speared off-track and through an ad hoarding before rejoining.

Posterity has established this as the move of the race but Lewis also had to work hard to pass Porteiro. Once in the lead he clocked the fastest lap of the race to emphasise his dominance before crossing the line for his fifth victory of the year. Piquet's only consolation was a post-race promotion from fifth to fourth when Porteiro was disqualified for a technical infringement picked up at scrutineering.



FERRARI TEAM PRINCIPAL FRÉDÉRIC VASSEUR WAS RUNNING HAMILTON'S ART GP TEAM:

"We had a lot of good race weekends that season. Lewis won both races at the Nürburgring – that was the first time he did it and this [Silverstone] was the second, if I remember correctly. Turkey [where Lewis finished second to Piquet in both races after starting fifth and seventh on the grid] was also a good one."

"I don't remember every detail of the Silverstone race but the important thing is it wasn't just about that overtake on Piquet and Piccione. Lewis won race one and because of

that [the partially reversed grid] he had to start from P8. And he came back and won the second one. Psychologically speaking, he took the lead on Piquet this weekend [he was already ahead on points]. Piquet even went out and crashed into the polystyrene board. That was good!"

"I think Lewis killed Piquet this day. He probably won the championship [that day]."

"It was also the first time that Ron [Dennis] came to the podium that year. I still have the picture in my office in Paris – taken from under the podium. I was with Steve Marcel [who had engineered Nico Rosberg to the 2005 title but only attended a handful of events in '06 owing to cancer treatment], who was working with us and unfortunately passed away later that year."





After following McLaren team-mate Kovalainen for five laps, Lewis swept by and put in a wet-weather masterclass

6 July 2008 British Grand Prix

When F1 celebrated its 1000th world championship GP in China in 2019, journalistic doyenne and *GP Racing* contributor David Tremayne compiled a list of best-ever drives to mark the occasion for the official F1 website. He placed Lewis Hamilton's performance in the 2008 British GP eighth overall in a pantheon which included Juan Manuel Fangio's Nürburgring 1957 masterclass and Jackie Stewart's four-minute victory margin at the 'Green Hell' in 1968.

Context is everything here. The season had begun with McLaren under a proverbial cloud after the 'Spygate' controversy and record fine the previous year. Its new car was equally matched with Ferrari's, though each had different strengths and weaknesses which played out from circuit to circuit. Victories in Australia and Monaco put Lewis in the points lead but then a bizarre pitlane blunder in Canada and resultant grid penalty served in France (where he fell foul of the stewards again) dropped him to fourth place.

On a sporadically wet Saturday Lewis qualified second to team-mate Heikki Kovalainen, a dispiriting 0.5s off. That night, Lewis's brother Nic delivered a crucial pep talk, reassuring him of his remarkable wet-weather driving gifts.

Race day was wet again but, after shadowing Kovalainen for five laps, Lewis went by into Becketts and disappeared into the distance as his championship rivals humiliated themselves in the tricky conditions. Felipe Massa spun five times.

As the gap to second stretched to half a minute the pitwall begged Lewis to slow down – but he couldn't, finishing over a minute ahead of Nick Heidfeld's Sauber. It was a drive of which Lewis's hero, Ayrton Senna, would have been proud.



ZERO FUEL FOUNDER AND CEO PADDY LOWE WAS McLAREN'S ENGINEERING DIRECTOR:

"One of Lewis's most exceptional qualities is his racecraft. Obviously he's very fast as well, one of those drivers who can just pull out an enormous lap where people go, 'Where on earth did that come from?' In his first year he got nine podiums in a row in the first nine races. I don't think anybody will do that ever again. On the 10th race [the European GP, where he finished ninth], he came on the radio to ask, 'Where do I go?' Because he didn't know where you parked the car when you weren't on the podium...

"Silverstone 2008 was a nice weekend – apart from the weather of course. But that was a big part of the story. As the engineering director I would go to races to keep in touch with everything – in the race itself I didn't sit on the pitwall, I would time our fuel connection because it's a very strategic input, but I would also time other teams' pitstops. I'd be wandering around the pitlane with about three stopwatches around my neck.

"Lewis arguably lost his championship in China in 2007. He wore his wet tyre through to the canvas and fell off in the pit entry – and it was our fault. So we became very conscious of tyre

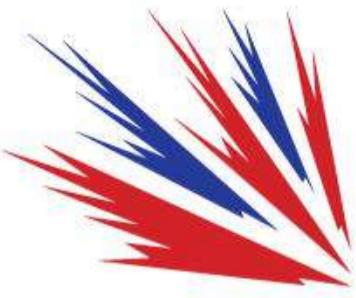
life in these wet/dry races. In Monaco in '08 we had similar changing conditions [the race went from wet to dry and Hamilton's strategy was compromised by an early stop for intermediates when he hit the barrier at Tabac on lap six]. I was looking over the pitwall trying to spot tyres – there were no sensors for wear in those days – and [McLaren team photographer] Steven Tee was next to me. I said, 'Steven, can you photograph that intermediate tyre every time please?'

We started doing it and I was able to radio the pitwall to tell them to keep him on the inter for much longer than they wanted to – I could look at the photos and say, 'The tyre's all right, keep going.' This was the first time anybody had done that and it was impromptu because Steve just happened to be there.

"So when we went to Silverstone I was doing the same but in a more planned way this time with the photographer – Steve again – organised for the job. Again we were able to keep the tyres safe because we had a photo every lap to understand how much tread we had left.

"And it was an enormous race from Lewis, as you saw!" ▶





SILVERSTONE PREVIEW



6 July 2014 British Grand Prix

Mercedes entered the new-for-2014 hybrid era with the most competitive engine and a quick chassis – also the least ugly of the new breed. Such was Merc's dominance that F1 'ringmaster' Bernie Ecclestone pushed through a ridiculous change to the championship format in which the final round awarded double points. But despite winning four rounds and taking two second places in the first eight races, Lewis arrived at Silverstone 29 points down on



After a difficult qualifying where he only managed sixth, and an early red flag, Lewis rejuvenated his title challenge with a win

team-mate Nico Rosberg.

Failures to finish in Australia (spark plug failure) and Canada (brakes), plus Rosberg's duplicity in Monaco (where he won from pole after scuppering Hamilton's final qualifying run with a Michael Schumacher-style 'spin') all conspired to sap Lewis's championship momentum. Not that Niki Lauda was concerned: "He will keep fighting. Don't worry."

In front of a packed home crowd Lewis appeared to be making heavy weather of qualifying, falling to sixth in changing conditions. Then on race day he had to contend with an early stoppage when Kimi Räikkönen

hit the barrier on the opening lap in his Ferrari and damaged a guardrail.

While the red flag threw tyre strategies into flux at this demanding circuit, come the restart Lewis got his head down and sliced through the field to challenge his team-mate – who ultimately retired with gearbox problems.

"I had my family with me and the support from the fans really spurred me on," said Lewis. "I couldn't have done it without them."

He also took issue with the cheap-looking plastic sponsor's trophy taking the place of the traditional Mervyn O'Gorman item: "Where's the gold one? This is broken already!"



ANDREW SHOVLIN REMAINS MERCEDES' TRACKSIDE ENGINEERING DIRECTOR:

"We'd made a really good start to the year. We had a very quick car and it became apparent quite quickly that the championship would be contested between Lewis and Nico. Lewis had suffered two DNFs, though, so he was looking to make up ground. Silverstone is a weekend everyone always looks forward to, with the team being based down the road.

"We'd won the British Grand Prix with Nico the year before and I'm sure for Lewis, he knew it was a great opportunity to take another victory in front of his home crowd and close the gap to Nico. Saturday wasn't straightforward though. The intermittent rain made it a difficult session and the improvements at the very end dropped Lewis to sixth. He was understandably very down on Saturday evening but you could see he was focused on coming back stronger the next day.

"He made a great start and it was shaping up to be an exciting race between him and Nico. A gearbox problem for Nico forced him to retire, though, and Lewis drove a controlled race to win. You could see the joy on his face to win at Silverstone. It was a tense year from there as both battled for the title but in the end, Lewis was a worthy winner." ▶



Lewis passes retired team-mate Rosberg (below) and he got to celebrate, eventually, with the traditional trophy (above)



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SILVERSTONE PREVIEW

2 August 2020 British Grand Prix

Silverstone hosted not one but two rounds of the world championship in 2020 as Formula 1 adapted to the circumstances of the pandemic, holding races behind closed doors and with minimal staff travelling in closely monitored 'bubbles'. Across the UK, with the exception of the back garden of 10 Downing Street, strict

quarantine measures prevailed. For once Lewis would have to do without the support of a vocal home crowd.

The opening phases of the race proved largely uneventful, except for a Safety Car deployment and some indiscipline in the midfield, as Lewis led from team-mate Valtteri Bottas. But here, in round four, it was becoming apparent that car development was pushing Pirelli's tyres to the limits of their endurance. Bottas and then McLaren's Carlos Sainz slowed in the final laps,

complaining of vibrations – which were signalling imminent tyre failure. Bottas's front-left exploded three laps from the end, while Sainz's front-left let go similarly as he dived for the pits with two to go. Max Verstappen made a precautionary stop, handing the slowing Lewis a 30-second lead.

But would it hold? As Lewis exited Brooklands on the final lap his front-left also shed its remaining tread, and he drove the half-lap of his life to nurse his car across the finishing line on three wheels...



The 2020 British GP was one of Hamilton's most dramatic wins as he had to complete half of the last lap with just three tyres

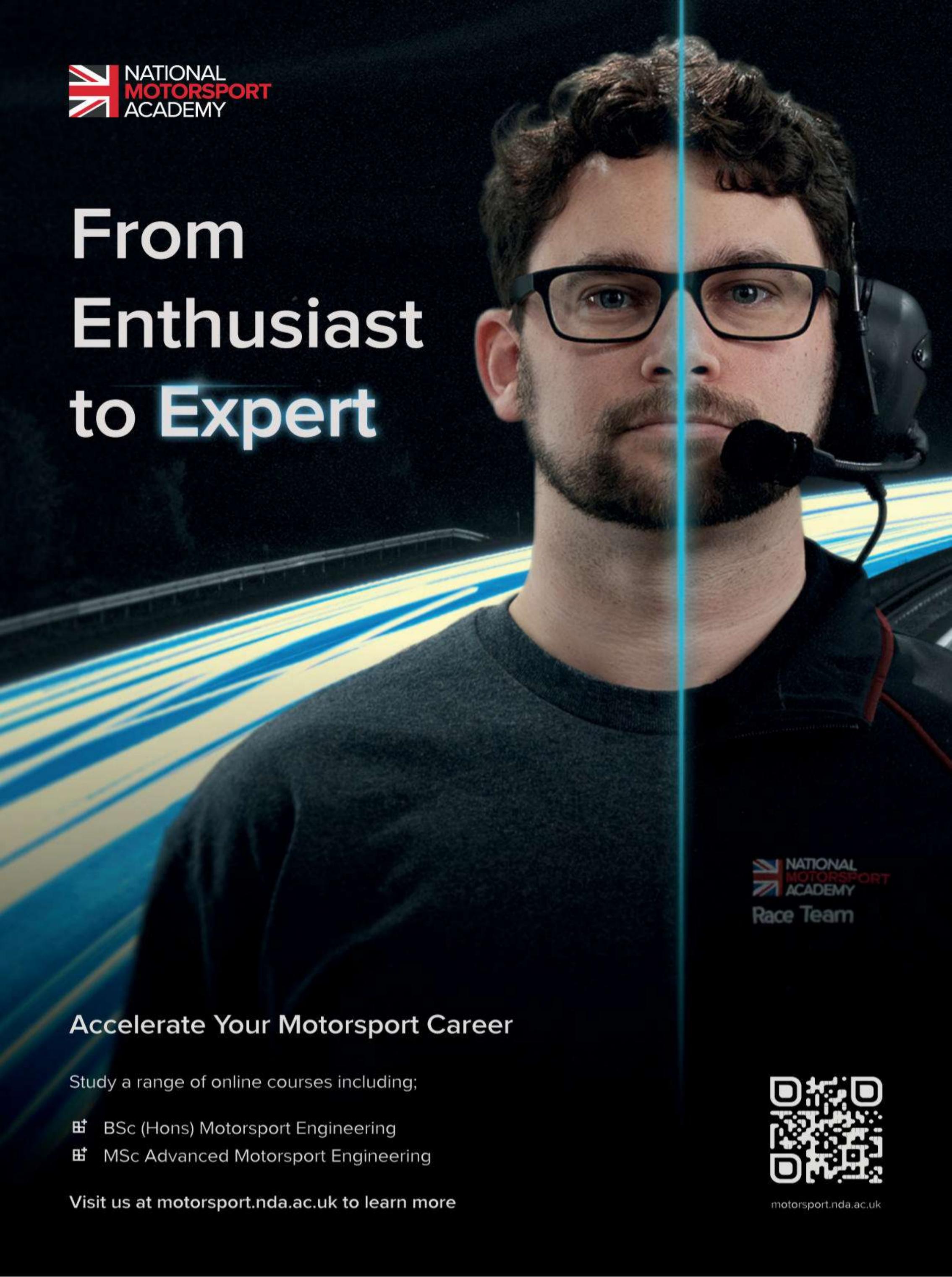


TOTO WOLFF IS THE MERCEDES TEAM PRINCIPAL:

"The weekend was a strange experience. We were so happy to be back racing but it was such an odd feeling doing it in front of empty grandstands. Silverstone is just 10 miles from our Brackley factory, and we always have a large number of factory-based staff able to come and see their cars racing. That is one of the things I remember most – being so disappointed that they couldn't be there. Seeing the cars on the grid before the start without that familiar Silverstone roar, particularly for Lewis who was starting on pole, was surreal."

"The race itself was relatively straightforward up until the final few laps. We had a brilliant car that year and our pace was stellar. However, we lost a 1-2 finish with Valtteri getting a puncture a few laps from the end. We knew it was going to be a long final stint for both drivers but didn't foresee the issues we would face in those closing stages. Once Valtteri's tyre had gone, we warned Lewis as quickly as we could to look after his. Of course he then had a similar issue and that final lap felt like one of the very longest of my career in motorsport. It was more a sense of relief rather than celebration when he crossed the line." 

From Enthusiast to Expert



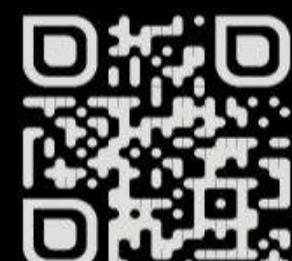
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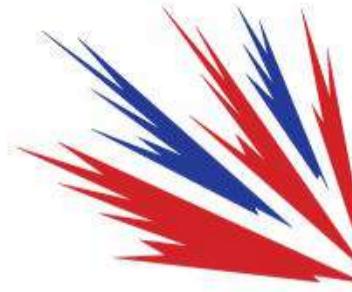
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SILVERSTONE PREVIEW

IN CONVERSATION WITH

GEORGE RUSSELL

The Trofeo Bandini winner has just had a ride in a century-old Mercedes – but he's fully focused on future developments, especially when his home race is coming up...

Congratulations on winning the Trofeo Bandini.

What was it like to try the 1924 Targa Florio car?

It was incredible driving the Mercedes from 100 years ago – the car hasn't been driven for over 80 years. And it's a car that you expect to see in a museum and never be touched. And to see how well it was driving, it was so loud. It sort of made the hair stand up on my skin. The steering wheel was so big, I couldn't actually reach the brake pedal. So I was having to use the handbrake on the side of the car, which I hadn't quite expected to do, but it was a real privilege – and seeing the Mercedes star on the front as well, and the history of that was pretty special.

Toto Wolff has talked about the team now finding improvements through incremental gains rather than looking for 'miracle cures'. What's your perspective on the development direction?

I think it's clear from two years ago that we didn't start on the right track. And we've been changing the track a number of times over these past two seasons, to try and find a path that we'll be able to build upon. Perhaps we've changed a couple of times too many. We've been trying to find development slopes that will give us big performance quick. And you know, maybe that just isn't feasible when you think these guys [other teams] have just been building upon their platform. And they have been doing a really great job.

I think it was obvious we overstepped the changes we made to this car. We've gone too far, in the other way, and we just need to reel it back slightly and find that happy medium. But as we've said number of times – if it was easy, everybody would be winning, and everybody would be finding lots of performance. We're competing with so many great teams. And we

just need to try and find that step that's going to bring us into that fight with the guys at the front.

Where is the car better after the update package that was fitted at Imola?

The car is definitely more balanced through the lap now. We were struggling a lot at the start of the year, balancing the high- to low-speed corners. And I think we've made progress – when you look at the gap to Red Bull, the gap to the rest of the midfield, we've moved forward. But I do think it's fair to say Ferrari and McLaren have moved forward at the same rate. So we need to keep on working, bringing those upgrades to the car. And the whole team are working flat out right now to bring them as quickly as possible.

Your team-mate said he thinks Andrea Kimi Antonelli is the best candidate to replace him next season. What's your opinion?

Kimi is a fantastic driver, obviously racing in Formula 2 this year, but he's no doubt going to be a Formula 1 driver in the future. He's a fellow Mercedes junior driver as well, coming through the ranks, as I did with the team. So I think it makes for a great opportunity for Mercedes building into the future. But as I said before,

I'd welcome anybody as my team-mate. I feel like I've got a pretty good team-mate right now as it is.

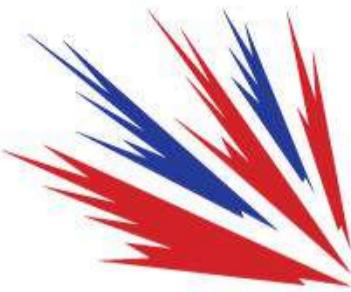
James Allison and Toto have made positive noises about Mercedes' 2026 engine project – how much confidence does that give you for the future?

2026 might seem like a long time away but in the world of Formula 1 it's going to be here tomorrow and the team are feeling really confident for this era. I think you know the experience Mercedes has had, the success in 2014 with the new [hybrid F1] powertrain, and then obviously the time in Formula E, the work that was done with the Hypercar. There are a lot of individuals within Mercedes HPP [High Performance Powertrains] who have got so much experience with this future technology. So I think that leaves us in a really great place to have a great engine. And the work Petronas are doing on the fuel as well is looking really strong. So on the engine side, I think we're feeling very confident for that era.

Looking slightly less further ahead – to this year's British GP – how confident are you in the trajectory of development at Mercedes enabling you to do a job in front of your home crowd?

I'm always really excited to go to Silverstone, but I think we're on a really good trajectory at the moment. We're bringing upgrades really quickly to the car, which we're confident will bring performance. Historically, we've always gone well around Silverstone as well and I think, now we're entering the European season, things are a little bit more consistent, and there are fewer sprint races as well. We know from the past we're really good at building throughout the season, so we're hoping by Silverstone we're going to be in that fight with the guys in front of us.

I'M ALWAYS REALLY EXCITED TO GO TO SILVERSTONE, BUT I THINK WE'RE ON A REALLY GOOD TRAJECTORY AT THE MOMENT



SILVERSTONE PREVIEW

IT'S A SETUP

Quick, quick, slow – dancing around the hallowed asphalt of Silverstone, bumps and all, demands much thought and delicate compromises from the tip of the car to its tail

WORDS MATT YOUSON PICTURES  AND SILVERSTONE



THERE ARE SEVERAL THINGS BRITAIN still does very well: a proper bacon sandwich; a well-organised queue; a high-speed FIA Grade One circuit. There aren't many venues on the calendar that challenge a Formula 1 car across the full range of its capabilities – but Silverstone occupies an exalted position within the handful that do. It tests the bravery of the driver as it does the dark arts of the designer. The skillset of the race engineer also gets thoroughly worked over too.

The circuit mods in 2010, designed to make Silverstone more bike-friendly, created a more nuanced Arena layout for F1 cars. Instead of being a high-speed monster it became a high-speed monster... with some really complicated slow bits. The bluff, old traditionalists may choke on their cucumber sandwiches but making a safer, more modern circuit also made it better. It still has that ragged-edge joy of seeing an F1 car on the absolute limit through the ultra-fast changes of direction at Maggots-Becketts-Chapel; it still has thunderous velocity through Copse, Stowe and Abbey... but it's the slow corners of Vale and Club, Village and The Loop where the lap is made or lost. The high-speed stuff isn't to be ignored, but the stupid-huge amounts of downforce the '22 technical regs deliver mean this isn't the Alpha and Omega anymore. It's now a circuit for balls and brains.



LMcCullough explains that setup at Silverstone is a matter of compromise and concessions

It's been a while since Tom McCullough was a race engineer tasked with setting up a car to tame Silverstone's challenges – but Aston Martin's performance director has a fine view of the circuit from his team's shiny new technology campus over the road. Setup, he says, is very much a question of deciding which concessions to make.

"It's a real challenge," he says, "because these modern cars don't want



The aerodynamics of F1 cars since 2022 means smaller rear wings are now the order of the day



the same setup in a high-speed corners as they do in the low-speed. So, you have to compromise. It's a fantastic circuit – but it makes you think.”

Rear wing level

Perhaps the best example of the aerodynamic superpower introduced to F1 in 2022 is the sight of F1 cars here eschewing the big rear wings of yore in

favour of medium downforce. The track is *very* power-sensitive and, while TV will undoubtedly describe Copse in tones verging on the near-hysterical, on a qualifying lap it's not quite the maximum-effort corner it once was.

“The modern generation of F1 car produces so much downforce in the high-speed that Silverstone has become a lower and lower-drag circuit as the efficiency of the circuit has gone up,” says McCullough. “Copse is easy-flat. It's all about reducing drag in qualifying. There's a lot of full-throttle time, so you need to be efficient, which means not carrying too much drag.”

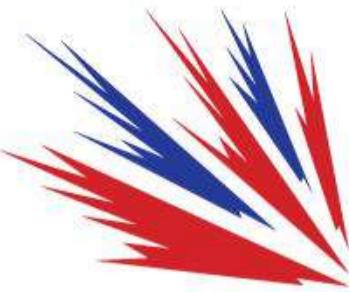
Gear choices

Easy-flat seems a little insulting to a corner of Copse's repute (cf Eau Rouge, 130R) but there is still nuance to be had, with drivers making gear choices, at low fuel, either going all the way up to eighth, or holding seventh to avoid a double-change down before Maggotts – which is now also flat.

“It often depends on the wind,” says Tom. “It can be quite strong there, headwind or tail, which will affect that choice. Also, sometimes energy management and whether you want to keep the revs up or down. We'll

Gear choices can be dependent on the direction of the wind, and energy management also plays a part





SILVERSTONE PREVIEW

sometimes be playing those trades – but normally, reducing the number of gearshifts makes it easier for the driver and the car. So, unless we really need that upshift, we would rather just not.”

Race bias

Silverstone has migrated from three to two DRS zones after the sight of cars flap-open through Abbey was considered too extreme. When more of the lap featured DRS teams usually ran more wing and, correspondingly, a smaller percentage of time spent with DRS active nudges teams to run with less – though McCullough argues qualifying considerations rarely feature, given the primacy of race setup. “Racing is the most important thing,” he says, “If you’ve got poor race pace, you’re not looking after your tyres, and you won’t have a good race. The rear wing level isn’t dictated by the DRS here.”

Tyre control

While Silverstone is still the recipient of Pirelli’s hardest compounds, the British GP has now become a straight-shootin’ one-stop race, with Max



Silverstone used to be harder on tyres. Greater downforce and less sliding means the race is now a nail on one-stop

Verstappen winning last year on a medium and soft strategy. This flies in the face of its reputation as a tyre killer but greater downforce means less sliding and lower degradation.

Getting the car into that one-stop window does, however, require careful management, virtually from lap one. It’s the left-side of the car that takes the most hammer, though whether it’s graining on the front-left or wear and degradation on the rear-left tends to depend on conditions.

“You’re harder on the tyres at the start of the race, because you have the highest fuel load and the heaviest car, but you’re also in traffic,” says Tom. “There’s more load on a car that’s sliding more in dirty air, so it’s always that first stint where you need to do the most management.

“Planning to do some lift-and-coast into the braking zones is always part of the game, but how hard you push into the high-speed corners at Silverstone is very important with these Pirelli tyres. We start getting into management, trying to not overheat the compounds, after one or two laps, once things settle down.”



With only two DRS zones teams tend to run less rear wing than before and concentrate exclusively on race pace



Ride height, as at all tracks, is worked on during free practice, and will be dialled in alongside the car’s stiffness

Ride height and stiffness

Working out tyre performance during free practice is half the setup battle at Silverstone. The other half is dialling in ride height and stiffnesses.

“With these cars, we’re trying to run relatively stiff to keep the ride-height platform under control,” says McCullough. “The run down the Hangar Straight has some bumps that, as the cars are flat-out, you definitely see load fluctuation and the rear ride height jumping around. But in the grip-limited zones in the corners, it’s not too bad.

“We play tunes from track to track with the difference between the vertical heave stiffness, and the roll stiffness, but Silverstone is one where we’re at the high end for both heave and roll. Maybe not necessarily the highest of the year, but pretty close to it.”

And this is the set-up for the British Grand Prix: lower downforce than you might expect, with a nebulous balancing act between the desire to reduce drag but not by so much that the car slides and cooks the tyres. A very stiff car in roll and heave to keep the aero platform stable and maximise performance in the high-speed corners, and a firm bias in favour of race pace over qualifying position. Brown sauce, no butter, mushrooms and/or tomatoes optional. 



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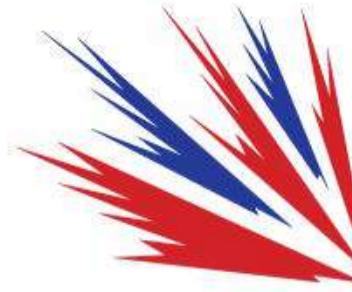
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SILVERSTONE PREVIEW

IN CONVERSATION WITH

WORDS ROBERT HOLMES
PORTRAIT MOTOSPORT IMAGES

LANDO NORRIS

McLaren is back challenging for grand prix victories and the Miami winner is very much looking forward to feeling the energy of his home crowd...

McLaren has generally not been great in low-speed corners for the past few seasons. That seems to have shifted a little with the first upgrade package. Has that lifted confidence?

A bit. It's still our biggest weakness. Even if you look to Imola, you look at Turn 7, that's still our worst corner, the chicane, still one of our worst corners. But I don't think we're bad. When we're saying it's our biggest weakness, we're talking about maybe half a tenth at times and that kind of thing.

Max Verstappen says he sees you and McLaren as championship rivals this season. Toto Wolff and Christian Horner seem to agree. Is that how you see yourself?

It's a long, long way to go. I'm definitely not thinking of it and it really doesn't change anything. We've not thought about it at all. You concentrate on getting a good result and things just play out. We've definitely put ourselves in there. We lost a lot over the first couple of [race] weekends, so that's hurt us, but there's still plenty of opportunities for us. And we know we still have some things coming in the future.

If things turn around, then we can easily start to come back at some of the teams. Especially because I think we're probably the team, along with Ferrari at least, where we have two cars up there performing at every session – every single race and qualifying. If you look at a lot of the grid they don't really have that. You have one guy who's put in a mega lap and then has a good race and the other one not so much. I think one of our

strengths is we've always had two cars up there and we can fight well along with Ferrari at the minute. So if we keep doing that then for sure we can stay in it.

Having reviewed the Imola data, was there anything you could have done differently to be closer to Max a couple of laps earlier?

I think we had a pretty optimal race. I clearly had the best race pace in the second stint by a considerable margin. At the same time, if I'd pushed more, I would have ended up like Max. So it's impossible, it's something you can't define. There isn't a yes or no answer. You win in one part, you're going to lose in another part. So I think we gave it our all. I didn't make any silly mistakes that cost me one second or something like that. I never went off-track; I didn't have any of those things. I just lost out on too much in the first stint. And that was just down to a couple of different things and just not quite having the pace compared with the Red Bull. But I think the team

executed everything well and that I did a good job. So, as much as it hurts, I think we did the best we could, simple as that.

How different is it to fight for wins rather than just podiums?

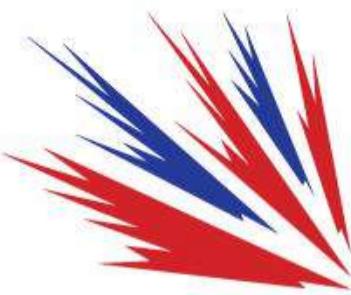
I just go out and do the same thing. Qualifying is the same, you go out and just try – even when you're in the 10th best car or whatever, you go out and you always have that hope, trying to deliver the best you can. That's my job, just going out and driving as quickly as I can. So whether that's for first, 10th or 20th, it's the same approach I have. For me it doesn't change. Maybe it puts a little bit more pressure on everyone just because one small mistake can be that bit more costly.

I look forward to it more because I know I have a better chance of maybe winning a race. So it kind of makes me more excited and a bit more hungry for it – but the approach of just going out and driving, it really doesn't change for me or for my team around me. It's kind of – do as normal because normal is very good.

Given McLaren's progress since the start of the year, how much are you looking forward to the British Grand Prix?

I'm super excited to be racing at home – I am every year. Silverstone is the best race of the season, and the fans make it the most energetic too. On track, it's going to be a very close battle at the top. I'd like to make the team and the country proud by going one step further than last year, so I'll be working hard to make that happen.

I'D LIKE TO MAKE THE TEAM AND THE COUNTRY PROUD BY GOING ONE STEP FURTHER THAN LAST YEAR, SO I'LL BE WORKING HARD TO MAKE THAT HAPPEN



SILVERSTONE PREVIEW

WHAT MAKES SILVERSTONE MEGA?

Silverstone hosted the first-ever world championship grand prix – and, unlike many other ‘classic’ tracks, it’s adapted with the times – even, dare we say it, improved with age. What sets it apart from other venues? Drivers from past and present explain...

WORDS JAMES ROBERTS, OLEG KARPOV

PICTURES motorsport
IMAGES



ALEX ALBON

Williams F1 driver

“I got my racing license when I went from seven to eight years old, at Silverstone. They had a little kart track set up, with a guy who reviewed your driving to see if you were safe, and I took a written test: what’s a yellow flag, what’s a green flag, right foot throttle, left foot braking, and so on. And then they gave you your racing license. That’s my very first memory of the place and I remember it clearly, like it was yesterday. I still remember the one question I got wrong, which was ‘When is scrutineering?’”

“Before that, I went to watch my first Formula 1 race. This was the early 2000s, the generation of Michael Schumacher, Rubens Barrichello, Juan Pablo Montoya. There was a competition at the track – you had to name the top three finishers. And I was a huge Schumacher fan so, not really knowing what was going on, I put my three favourite drivers in

the list: Schumacher first, Barrichello second and Montoya third. Then on the back in case people were tied, there was a tiebreaker, something like closest fastest lap time – my dad filled that in for me because I had no clue.

“And I won! I got to go on stage and got these prizes – a hat, a big track map with signatures from Michael, Rubens, Ross Brawn, Jean Todt – which I’ve still got to this day.

“My first time driving a car at Silverstone was for the judging in the McLaren Autosport BRDC Award. I drove the DTM car, a Formula 2 car and a GT3 car, I think. It was like a shootout. I was up against Ben Barnicoat, Sennan Fielding, Harrison Scott, and some guy called George Russell. Harrison, actually, is now our sim driver at Williams. In the end, the result came down to George and me. And they chose George. But I was quicker!

“Silverstone is a proper drivers’ circuit. And it’s good for racing. I think people forget it generally promotes good racing. It and Suzuka are my two

favourite circuits. Silverstone is a bit wider, a bit more forgiving, and has a bit more run-off area than Japan – so it’s easier to get confident earlier in the weekend. But I think what makes Silverstone so special as well is just the noise, the energy within the circuit – because it’s such a huge place, you know, it’s a massive amount of land. But yet it’s totally packed with fans. That’s pretty special.

“Two other things which make Silverstone special are... OK, this might sound boring and technical, but the cars are super-sensitive to wind around that track because it’s an airfield. So there’s no protection, it’s all open. The car can be totally different one session to the next if the wind even shifts a few degrees – it really plays a big part. Also, it’s a track that rewards high-speed precision driving; a lot of the corners are just flat.

“F1 cars are supposed to be driven fast. Street tracks, low speed, heavy cars – you don’t feel that. But when you come to Silverstone you have it – you feel like you’re driving the quickest car in the world.”

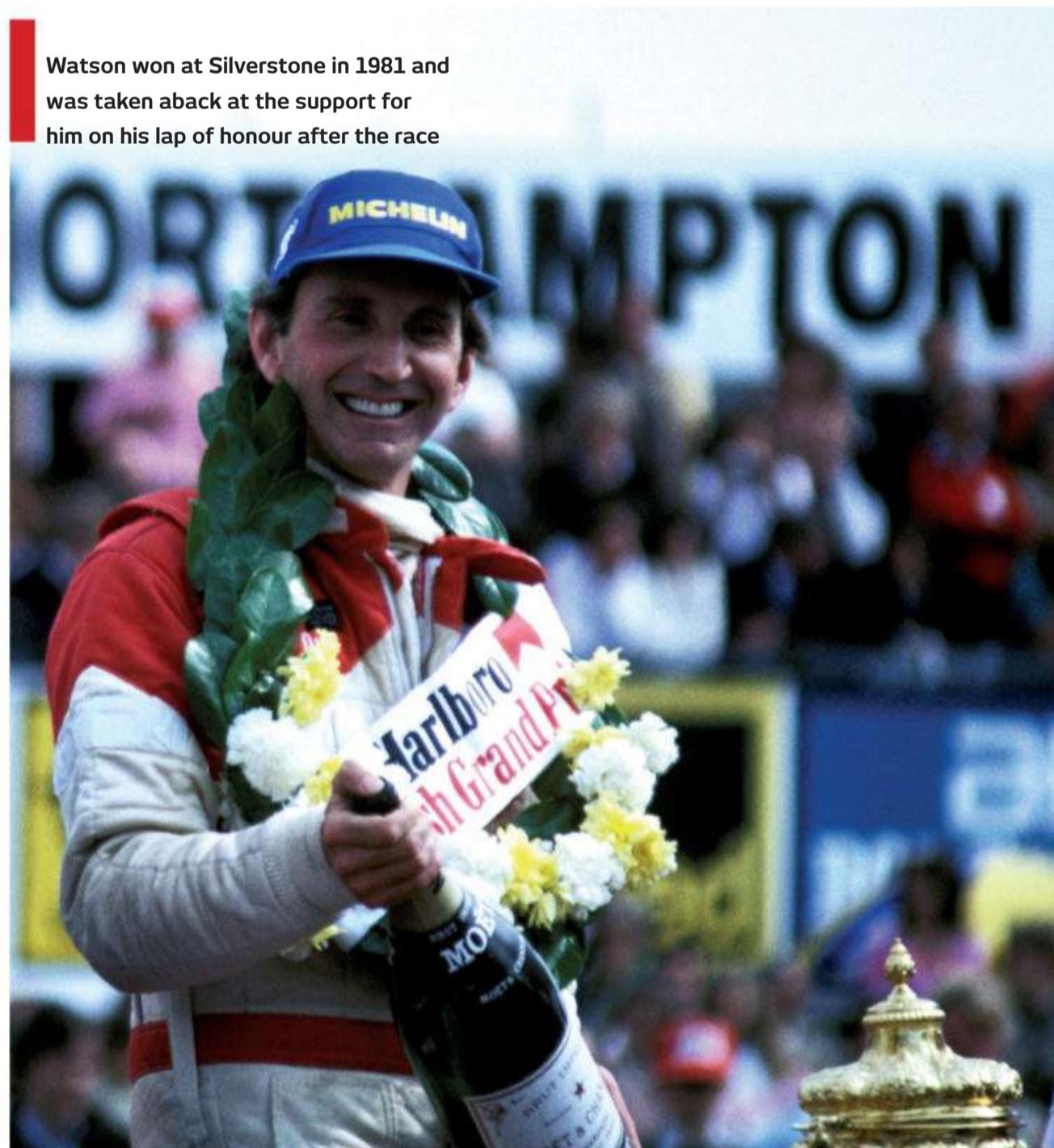
JOHN WATSON

1981 British Grand Prix winner

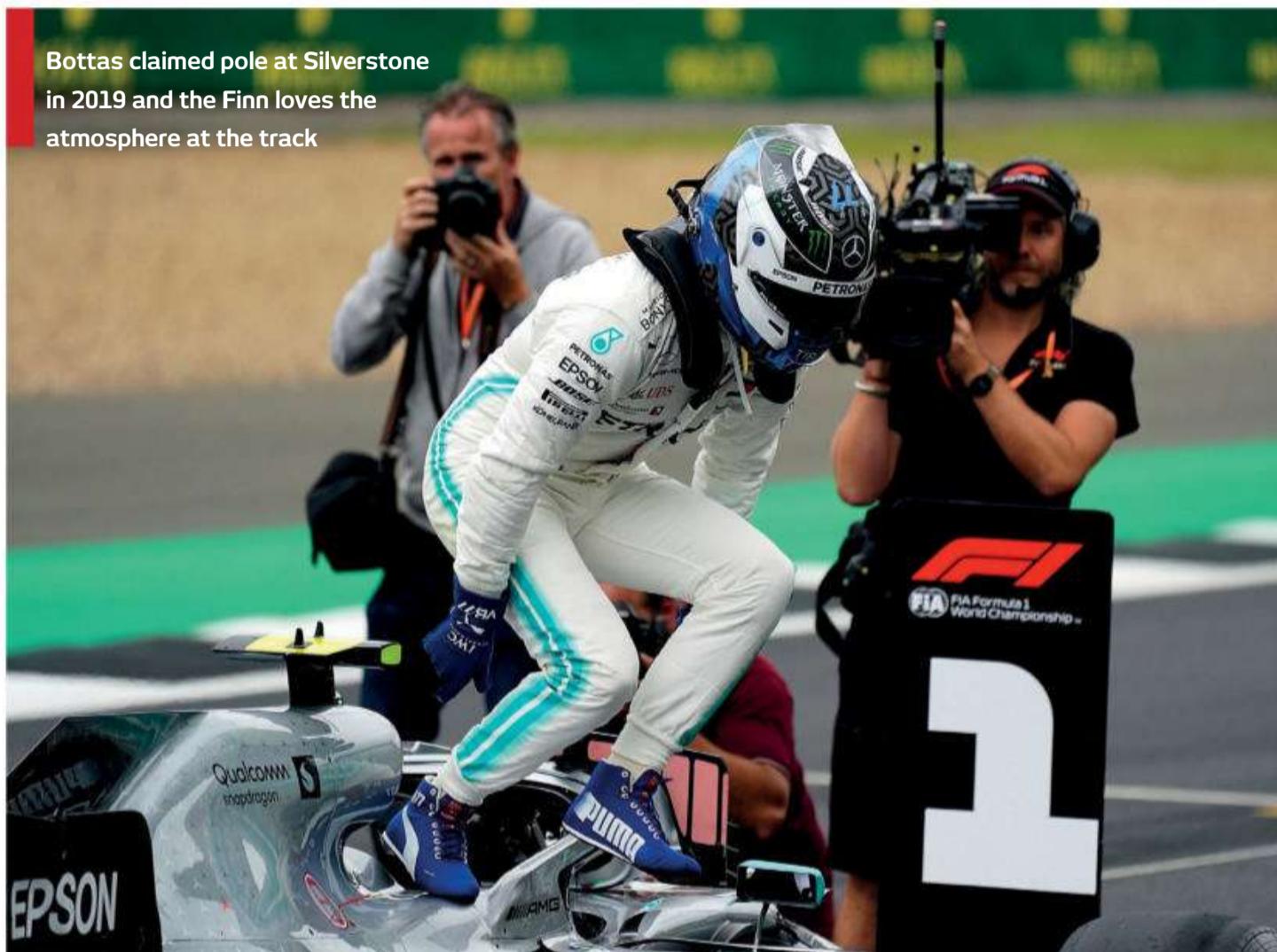
"A British crowd is knowledgeable, patriotic, they support the home drivers and someone like Nigel Mansell said it was worth a second a lap. I don't know if he was consciously raising his game or whether he was carried along by the crest of support but he knew everyone was there to support him."

"I was aware of it when I won in 1981 and one of things I tried to do was block that out once I got myself into the lead – I had to not think I'd won the race already. I could see there was a wave of emotion and support building. When the race finished we got on a lorry and did a lap of honour and, when we came through Becketts, the circuit was a sea of people — I realised they were doing it for me. So many people wanted to express their pleasure by coming on to the track. From time to time someone will come up to me and they'll say they were at Silverstone in '81 and they thank me as I got an unbelievable reception — it was arguably the most memorable event in my life."

Watson won at Silverstone in 1981 and was taken aback at the support for him on his lap of honour after the race



Bottas claimed pole at Silverstone in 2019 and the Finn loves the atmosphere at the track



VALTTERI BOTTAS

Stake F1 driver and British GP polesitter and podium finisher

"Silverstone is a combination of two things, the track layout – high-speed corners which have a nice flow – and its atmosphere. When I first drove Silverstone it was definitely the fastest track I'd ever driven. Then the faster your car, the more fun it gets."

"Then it's the history and the atmosphere. There are so many fans all around the track, not just the main grandstands. It's cool to see people camping there and everyone lives and breathes motorsport. The fans support their home drivers but I feel they still respect everyone. It's unique in its own way."

"Personally, I love the camping. I always stay in a motorhome and it's nice to be part of that atmosphere. It takes me back to my karting days when we used to have a trailer behind the car and park up for the weekend and go racing with the whole family. In the evening you have the smell of the sausages and in the morning the smell of the race cars. It's real motorsport for me." ▶



SILVERSTONE PREVIEW

ANTHONY DAVIDSON

Former F1 racer, Sky Sports pundit
and Mercedes simulator driver

"It's one of the only tracks today that tests an F1 car to its limits in high-speed cornering. And this circuit pushes the tyres to the limits of their structural rigidity because there's so much lateral load going through them. That's why we go to the highest-construction tyre and the highest pressures that Pirelli mandate. When you talk about that level of loading and G-force it equates to great fun inside the car. That's why we do it, we love that exhilaration of hustling cars around fast, flowing corners.

"The dominating feeling is G-force, which is sky high – you feel four times your body weight and you feel the loading of the car through the tyre and steering wheel, you struggle to hold your neck up. It's a special feeling to have that much grip, going that fast with the car so loaded and yet you can still get to the point where you start to feel the limits of adhesion.

"That's where the real skill comes into it. You're playing with very fine margins at that point because it can easily snap away from you if the floor isn't working in the direction that it's designed to generate the most downforce from – in other words, a straight line. If you allow the car to pivot too much, the wings start to lose downforce and then it's exponential when you lose grip.

"Add in the history and the fact it's your home track, it elevates the place to a venue that, personally, no other track can match. As it's on an old airfield, there's no elevation change, but that's the one thing it is lacking compared with the likes of Suzuka or Spa. It's definitely stood the test of time and the changes made to the track suit a modern day F1 car even more.

"Even on a cold winter's day when there's no one around, Silverstone is special because you can stand on those iconic corners such as Stowe and think that was the spot where Mansell pulled off his iconic move on Piquet. And you get a shiver down your spine because the asphalt holds the history. I was actually there standing on the banking watching in 1987. Well, in reality I was looking at people's backs and shoulders because I was so small. But even at that young age I appreciated the enormity of the occasion."

Davidson was in the crowd in 1987 and the history of the track is one of many reasons he finds Silverstone so special





Warwick won at Silverstone in everything except F1 but still rates the circuit as the best in the world

DEREK WARWICK

Le Mans 24 Hours winner, World Sportscar Champion, former F1 racer and British Racing Drivers' Club president

"People would often say to me a home circuit is worth two tenths – but to me that implies we're rubbish because we're two tenths off at every other circuit. I don't buy into that. I enjoy Silverstone simply because it's my home track. I've won in every discipline I've ever driven there, apart from Formula 1. It's just a great circuit – in all configurations it's had. I then became more involved after my racing, 12 years on the main board and eight years as president.

"A modern car can't express itself as well on a shorter, smaller circuit. When you go onto the track at Silverstone, you need to make sure you have the right underwear for the commitment you need. The speeds they carry through the corners separate the men from the boys. Personally, I remember the applause, the flag-waving, screaming and shouting that would come from the BRDC clubhouse when you used to enter the pits. I would put Silverstone as the top circuit in the world for me."

Derek Warwick's autobiography *Never Look Back* is published in July (see p104).

KARUN CHANDHOK

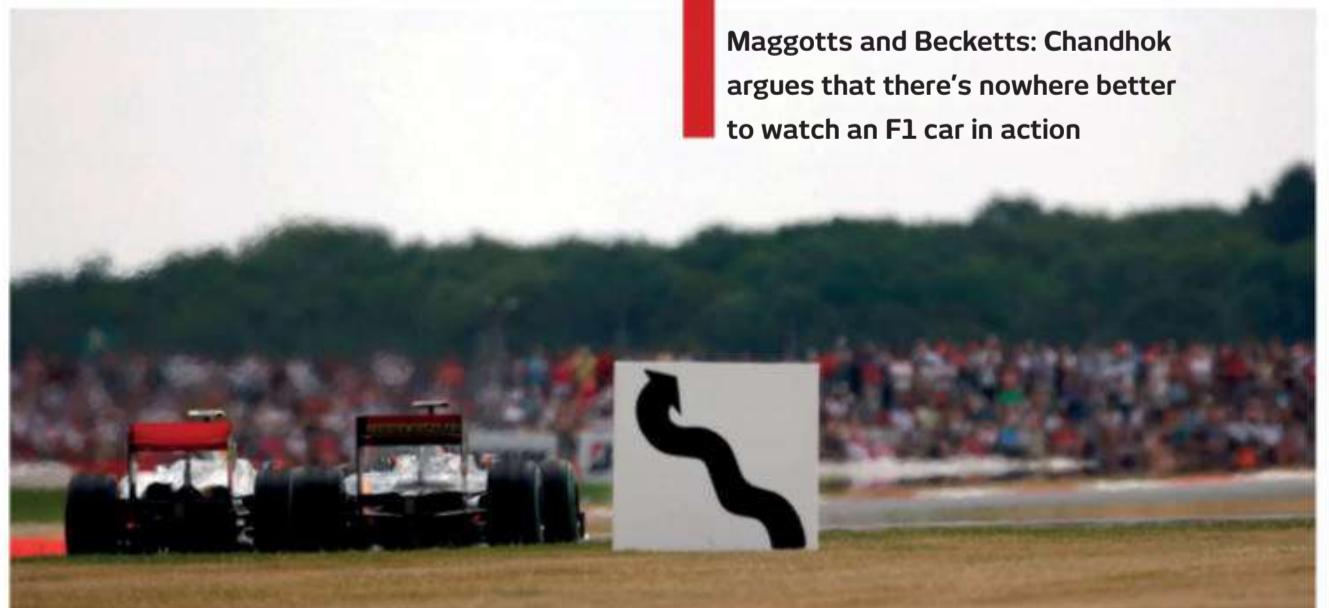
Sky Sports commentator and former F1 racer

"When you look at the changes to the layout from 1990 to '91, they did the right thing, the vision back then was right. Then the change between 2009 and '10 I felt was to create a longer lap and provide more grandstand seating for everyone. We lost Bridge corner, but it's still retained the ethos of a fast, flowing circuit. The new Turns 1 and 2 are fast and the Loop creates the overtaking into Brooklands after the Wellington Straight."

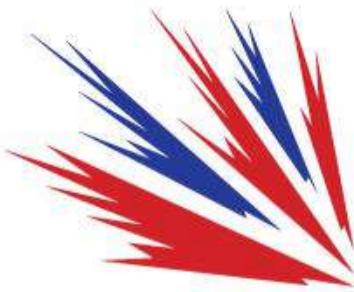
"It's a great circuit and you really see a grand prix car flex its muscles at its best at Silverstone. Watching at Maggotts and Becketts is the best place on the planet to watch an F1 car, along with the Esses at Suzuka. It's magical. I've done track days there in different cars and it's still great fun. You get a buzz and it reminds you why you fell in love with driving race cars. It's such a high, it's almost like a dopamine hit."



The new Turns 1 and 2, which were first used in 2010, haven't changed the feel of the track according to Chandhok



Maggotts and Becketts: Chandhok argues that there's nowhere better to watch an F1 car in action



SILVERSTONE PREVIEW

MARK BLUNDELL

Le Mans 24 Hours winner and former F1 racer

"It's a circuit that makes the hairs on your neck stand up because when you go out you know you're going to be challenged. It will always get your attention when you're in top gear. It's definitely a circuit that's hugely rewarding when you get it right. But if you get it wrong, you get paid back mightily."

"I did a lot of testing for McLaren in 1992 and the old Bridge corner was a huge commitment in a car from that era. Going through there will stick in my mind until the day I die. Trying to go through flat was tricky and, bearing in mind the speeds and the approach, the run-off wasn't that great. You needed to carry the speed through the corner to get the lap time, but if you were out of precision with the line, or got it wrong, you'd pay the price."

"In 1993, in the wet on Friday, I was so pumped up I came through the speed trap 15-20mph quicker than anyone – but didn't come out the other end. I was in the middle of the track getting out of the car when the two McLarens went either side. I was very fortunate I didn't get collected..."

Brundle, who was on the podium that day, remembers clearly the track invasion after Mansell's 1992 win



Ayrton Senna going through Bridge in 1991. For Blundell it was a corner that demanded massive commitment

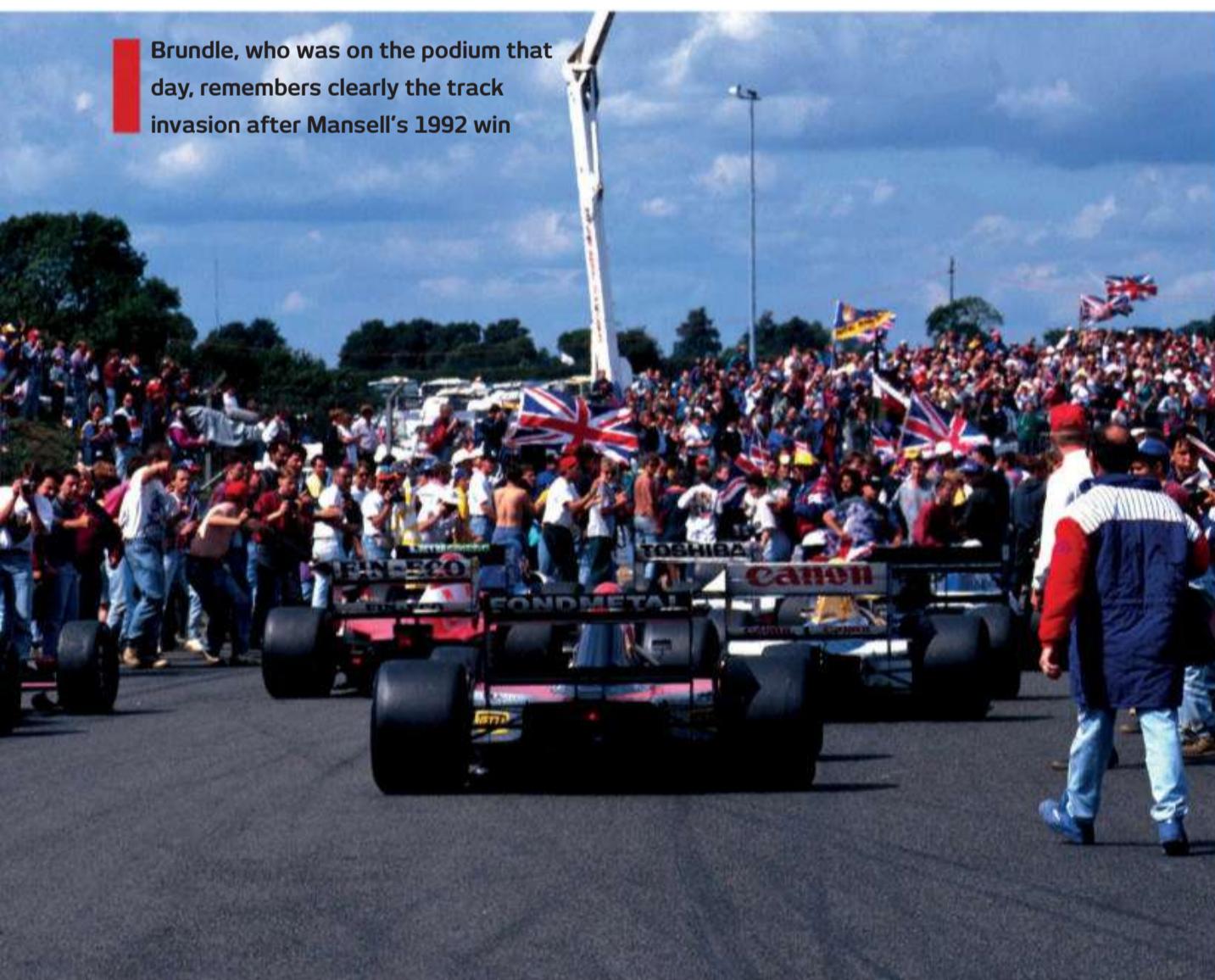
MARTIN BRUNELLE

Sky Sports commentator and British GP podium finisher

"There's always a massive crowd at Silverstone. They're well-informed and back in the day they would have appreciated Ayrton Senna as much as Alain Prost or Michael Schumacher. A lot want a British victory and we'll never forget Nigel's 1992 win. It was extraordinary how the crowd reacted and the track invasion was wild. I have vivid memories of that day since I was on the podium."

"I recall trying to get my car back to parc fermé and it was boiling like a kettle when I finally got there. On the slow-down lap I came round Club and people were everywhere. I was on tick-over bumbling through and one guy just stuck a baby out from his right arm above my car, to stop me for an autograph... That was a surreal moment."

"When I think of Silverstone, I think of going out of the pits on a sunny day and heading down Hangar Straight and seeing Stowe coming up on the horizon. That feeling is fantastic – what more could you want? At the wheel of a Formula 1 car, the sun is out, you've come out of the pits, round Maggotts, Becketts and Chapel. You're building up to a couple of hundred miles an hour. You've got the whole day or weekend ahead of you. That's a feeling etched in my memory, that feeling of the world's a good place right now." 





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IN WITH A SHOUT

Most people thought **Yuki Tsunoda's** latest F1 role was to be a measuring stick for Daniel Ricciardo. Had the Australian beaten his quick but occasionally erratic, often shouty team-mate, he'd have paved the way for a comeback to Red Bull Racing.

But Tsunoda has transcended those expectations by being less inconsistent and a lot less shouty – and still very, very quick...

WORDS OLEG KARPOV PICTURES MOTORSPORT IMAGES AND RED BULL CONTENT POOL

On the evening of 29 October 2023, Yuki Tsunoda felt completely destroyed. He locked himself in his hotel room and wouldn't come out until the next morning. He knew he'd screwed up.

"I just had to breathe," he says, leaning back in his chair and exhaling as he reveals to *GP Racing* the torment of last year's Mexican Grand Prix.

"Yeah... I wasn't really thinking about the team. I was probably thinking only about myself. I was trying to catch and overtake Daniel – just for myself, just to prove it."

Until lap 49 he'd had an amazing race. From 19th on the grid he was up to 14th by lap two, eighth when Kevin Magnussen's crash prompted a red flag on lap 34. New tyres, 35 more laps to the end, no more pitstops. Just bring the car home and four points with it. But Yuki didn't want points – he wanted to beat Daniel Ricciardo. Because he knew he was quicker. And he wanted everyone else to know it too.

The team's late-season upgrade push had started to pay off. And in Mexico AlphaTauri (now RB) was particularly strong – enabling Daniel to claim an incredible fourth on the grid. Yuki had been quicker than his team-mate in FP3 but simply didn't get the chance to show what ➤

he could've done in qualifying, thanks to an engine-change penalty.

"I was frustrated," Tsunoda admits.

"Unfortunately or fortunately, in that race it was probably the best car we had the whole year. We struggled so much in the first half of the season, and now he's got the best car in the best timing – and I couldn't show that performance. That kind of clicked me to rush in the race to try to overtake him. If I think now, calmly, had I ended up P8 starting from P19 – it's still a great result. But I didn't think about it at that point, because I was just too focused on proving to the team, to all the people, that I'm the better driver."

It's probably not easy to be Daniel Ricciardo's team-mate. Dan's charismatic, funny, good with the media, and even when he's slow he knows how to make it sound like he actually isn't – to sow a seed of doubt that there's something else going on. But when he's fast he makes sure everyone notices.

Remember Mexico 2018, when Daniel took pole by 0.026s over Max Verstappen and then bugged Max further by celebrating "as if he'd become world champion"?

Ricciardo's qualifying performance at the same track five years later was seen as a sign that he's getting closer to what everyone knows he's here for – turning this stint with Red Bull's junior squad into a ticket back to the first team. Paddock groupthink then determined it was

only a matter of time provided Daniel could consistently beat his team-mate until a vacancy at Red Bull Racing arose.

SCREAMING PITCH

But imagine you're Tsunoda in that scenario. You've made clear, near-linear progress over two and a half years with the junior team, you were almost as quick as Pierre Gasly by the end of your second season, and you've just made a Formula E champion look like a non-entity. Yet you're now seen as a measurement tool for Ricciardo by pretty much everyone, including the influential Helmut Marko. If Daniel beats you – he goes to Red Bull. If he doesn't – well, he is probably not as good as he used to be.

Catching and overtaking Ricciardo that Sunday in Mexico – and from the last row on the grid – would have been a great statement. Unfortunately nobody had kept Oscar Piastri in the loop about its importance. A few laps after the restart only Piastri's McLaren stood between Yuki and his team-mate. Sixth-placed Daniel was still in sight – yet slowly building a gap. If Yuki wanted to beat Daniel here, he had to get a move on... but after a long wheel-banging battle, Yuki overcommitted into Turn 1, touched the unco-operative McLaren yet again, and was pitched into a spin.

Instead of a statement, the F1 world got another confirmation of its assumptions:

Tsunoda will crash, then he'll get on the radio to shout. All that was left for him to do was to lock himself in a room and internalise this latest lesson.

That image of a screaming and crashing Yuki was formed in the first half of his first season. And while now Tsunoda can be used as a prime exemplar of Franz Tost's famous "a driver needs three years to show his full potential" truism, F1 isn't exactly the place where opinions are always based on thorough, long-term analysis. Perception is all.

Thus a successful 2021 grand prix debut in Bahrain was almost immediately overshadowed by a scrappy weekend in Imola where he effed and blinded on the radio about "traffic paradise" (a Japanese term for street closures) in practice, then shunted in Q1. The image of a fast but erratic driver, prone to venting his spleen from the cockpit, became crystallised.

"Yeah, I remember it," smiles the team's technical director Jody Egginton as *GP Racing* sits down with him three years on from that crash in the same paddock in Imola. "I can say it now: it was unnecessary. The car was quick, he was quick. If you think about his first year, we'd had quite a good winter testing with him and he showed a lot of potential early on – and that was valid. But we weren't putting it together. It's okay to be quick. But what we've got to do is put a weekend together."

In his charge up the order to attack
Ricciardo in Mexico in 2023 Tsunoda
came a cropper trying to pass Piastri





Ahead of Ricciardo in free practice in Mexico last year. This is what he wanted the world to see in the race...

INCIDENT MAGNATE

Not only did Tsunoda keep getting caught up in incidents after that, but the speed had gone. And then the confidence followed. He still harbours doubts, though, about what was actually damaged first: his self-belief or the chassis. The initial inspection after the crash turned up no issues and Yuki kept using the same car for the next few months, until he started to question the reasons behind an ever-present gap to Pierre Gasly.

“Don’t get me wrong, 100% there was my side,

that I wasn’t able to perform well in the first half of season,” he says. “But at the same time, I felt the rear end was weak: as I was turning it would slide too much – since that crash in Imola. And then [it showed] on lap time, I was always six-seven tenths behind Pierre. And the worst was in Russia. In FP1, even if my lap felt good, I was almost 1.5 seconds off. So, after around ten races I started to have this question mark about my chassis, I started to speak with the engineers.”

AlphaTauri never did uncover a chassis

problem, but Yuki eventually got a new one ahead of the race in Turkey.

“It was the first time for me, and Pierre drove there the year before,” Yuki says, “but from FP1 [onwards] I was able to match his lap time, it was never like seven-eight tenths [again]. And the last three races, I started to feel like [I had] a normal car.”

Whether there was some otherwise undetectable issue with the previous chassis or this was simply a case of the placebo effect, we will never know for sure.

“He’s not the first driver in F1 to have that feeling,” says Egginton. “And I can see where it comes from: we changed the chassis, the results improved. But there have been many instances of chassis not being changed and results improving. At the end of the day, it’s important to listen to the drivers – and in this team we do listen.”

One thing’s for certain: Yuki is adamant his ➤

TSUNODA "WAS MAKING BIG PROGRESS" DURING YEAR TWO. "HE PUSHED PIERRE HARDER, WITHOUT A DOUBT. BUT I'D FLIP THE STORY AROUND AND SAY PIERRE PROBABLY PUSHED HIM HARD" JODY EGGINTON

first-year struggles helped him grow as a driver.

"I tried to change everything to make it work somehow because I never struggled as much before in my career," he recalls. "And in the end, I just went back to everything I did in the first race. Because I struggled so much, I discovered a lot of things about myself. I think I experienced almost everything in that first year. And in terms of progress, I would say that was a very important year."

A GASLY BUSINESS

Tsunoda ended his rookie season with a fourth-place finish in Abu Dhabi. Had that race run a lap longer, he might have overtaken Carlos Sainz for third. But even without that it marked the first weekend where he was ahead of Gasly in both qualifying and the race.

It foreshadowed a better 2022. After a 21-1 qualifying defeat in his rookie season, Yuki was able to run with Gasly more consistently – and he boldly claims that towards the second part of the season he was the quicker of the AlphaTauri drivers.

"In the dry, I was probably faster than him most of the time," he says. "I would say then I was still not really good in the rain or, you know, changeable conditions – and that year we had a lot of these dry-wet sessions, and I wasn't performing well enough, and I knew that. That was my weakness."

This time the qualifying score was a much

more respectable 13-9 (still in Gasly's favour). And, excluding the wet sessions, Tsunoda's average one-lap deficit to Gasly was just 0.024s. He scored 12 points to Pierre's 23, but that gap is largely the result of the Baku round, where Gasly finished fifth and Tsunoda's DRS failed while he was running seventh.

"I had a lot of races where I lost points with

the situations I couldn't control," Yuki says, "and I think if I include that race in Baku, probably I would end up with the same points or slightly higher."

Egginton is slightly less convinced of that but readily admits Tsunoda "was making big progress" during year two.

"He pushed Pierre harder, without a doubt," he says. "But I'd flip the story around and say Pierre probably pushed him hard. If you've got another team-mate who was new to the business, maybe he [Yuki] would have progressed at a different rate. I saw a lot of positives in Pierre pushing him and being very open. He's a better



After a difficult rookie season Yuki challenged experienced team-mate Pierre Gasly much harder in 2022



driver through working with Pierre, for sure."

And while the team didn't get the chance to see how they'd compare in a third year together, as Gasly departed to Alpine, Yuki's start of 2023 was good enough to end his replacement team-mate's F1 career after just 10 races.

TAKING CHARGE

Gasly's departure to Alpine presented Tsunoda with an opportunity.

"It was good for me," he says. "Obviously, because of what he [Gasly] achieved with the team – and he deserved it – I feel like the team

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"I FEEL LIKE [WHEN I HAD A GOOD RESULT] IT USED TO BE, 'OK, MAYBE I WAS LUCKY OR SOMETHING'. NOW I DON'T FEEL THAT WAY - I JUST FEEL LIKE I DESERVE IT. I FEEL MUCH STRONGER"



was relying on him. But also, it was the situation I wanted to be in myself in the future.

"When Nyck [de Vries] came, the team probably didn't know which driver is faster, and I'll be completely honest, [ahead of the] first race in 2023, for the team to rely fully on me would have been too early. The results I showed in 2022 were okay, but it wasn't enough to convince them I could be a kind of leader. So, my targets kind of changed a little bit – at that point, [I felt]

In Brazil last year Tsunoda finished ahead of Ricciardo in the sprint and the GP, scoring well-deserved points in both

like, OK, now it's time to prove myself that I can be the driver who they can rely on."

"He worked hard," Egginton confirms. "There was a period when I'd get to the factory and Yuki was there every day. I've never seen the driver at the factory so much."

"So yes, he was getting better. Brazil 2023 jumps out to me. 2021 Yuki – and maybe '22 as well – wasn't great in Brazil. And I was nervous in '23. I remember telling the engineers, 'We've got to get him through this one.' But he was fantastic from the off [sixth in the sprint and ninth in the grand prix] and he didn't need any help. So I was really impressed with that."

The perception Tsunoda has raised his game again in 2024 is probably accurate. Yet there's arguably nothing surprising about him being faster than Ricciardo – this was evidently the case by the end of 2023. What's different this year is Tsunoda's consistency.

"His pace was always there," Egginton says. "What he's doing now is he's putting weekends together. When you're a young driver coming in it's probably not easy to get your head around what's important and who's important, and what information needs to be transmitted. He's doing that now. And I think that comes across in his communications over the radio in the race as well."

And his confidence – shaken by that troubled first year – is also back.

"I very much trust myself [now], a lot," Yuki says. "Compared with the time I was struggling, it feels different. And it affects everything else: how I approach race week. If you feel confident, you don't have to think about anything other than driving. I feel like [when I had a good result] it used to be, 'OK, maybe I was lucky or something'. Now I don't feel that way – I just feel like I deserve it. I feel much stronger."

There's still some anger management work to be done, as Yuki's in-lap actions in Bahrain demonstrated. But his 2024 campaign has left no doubt he's now the stronger of the two Faenza team drivers – and he didn't need a miracle in Mexico to prove it. Beating his current team-mate in almost all the other grands prix they've spent with the same machinery has been more than enough. 





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OLIVER BEARMAN



10 THINGS I LOVE



Ferrari's reserve driver on his dogs and forbidden sporting passions



Watching my brother Thomas race

Racing is my biggest passion. It's what I love most. So I watch it all: not just F1, but also the WEC, ELMS, GTs, all the lower-formula categories – and my brother's karting races. He's competing in the European and British championships now, and that's the most nervous I get when I'm watching any race – because it's my brother, of course. But it's also very entertaining, because karting always provides good and tough battles, so it's super-interesting.



Tennis

This is a new hobby of mine. I went to the Monte Carlo Masters in April and really enjoyed it. Then I went to the final of the Barcelona Open and after Silverstone I'm going to Wimbledon to watch some matches. So I'm really looking forward to it, it's going to be a lot of fun.

Dogs

I grew up around dogs. When I was born we had a huge Siberian Husky – she was bigger than me for a long time – so I've always been very comfortable around dogs. Now we have two dogs, an English Bull Terrier and a Boston Terrier. They've been with us for six and three years now – and I love seeing them. I miss them a lot because they're in the UK and I'm in Italy. They're really, really cool.



Travelling

I love seeing new places. It's one of the perks of the job, I guess, because I do a lot of it. But even in my spare time I like to explore new locations, even if they're close by. In Italy I like to go to the mountains. I like to go to places I've never been before. And, being part of the F1 parade, you get to enjoy a bunch of cool places that you wouldn't normally have gone to. I've never been to Mexico, I've never been to China, I've never been to Australia – so it was really, really cool to go there with F1.

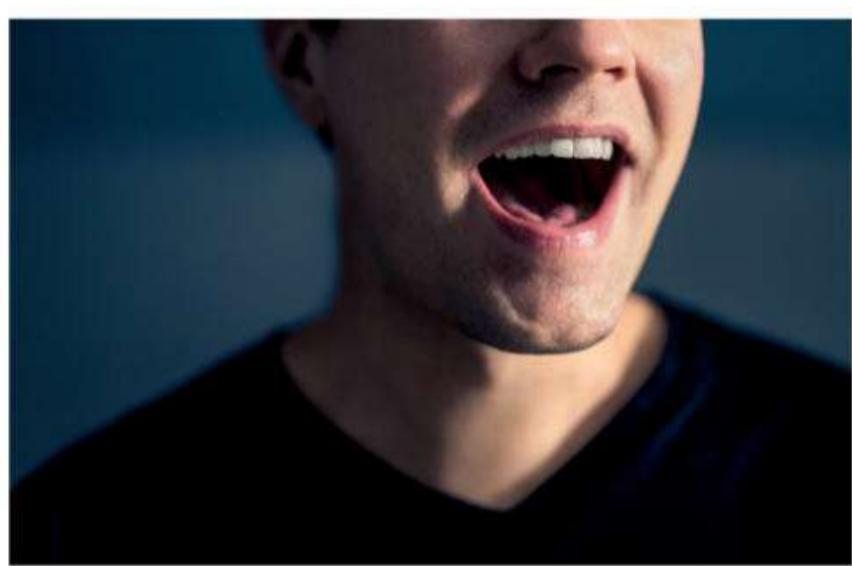


Mauritius

We went there on holiday a couple of years ago. Tiny island, but it's just incredible! So much great scenery. You know, there's a volcano that's not active anymore, of course, but it's very impressive. We also went on some boat trips to some islands nearby, I saw dolphins and sharks – and we went deep-sea fishing too. It's a country I really enjoyed visiting and I'm definitely going back.

Singing

Let's get this out of the way: I'm an awful singer. But I do love to sing. I'll never sing on stage, but I'm one of those people who sings non-stop in the shower and in the car. I know so many song lyrics, so I spend all my car journeys just singing. I think I love driving because I get to sing. But I'm a big fan of music in general. I have a record player and a small vinyl collection.



Cycling

It's one of my favourite ways to exercise and it's the closest I can get to racing – with the speed and everything... There are some great places to cycle in Italy or around Monaco. Just fantastic scenery. And my new bike is coming very soon, so I'm really excited about that – and I'm going to put a lot of miles on it.



Padel

I'm a big fan although I'm pretty bad at it. To be honest, I'm not very good at many sports apart from racing. But I really enjoy padel. It doesn't take a lot of skill, but you have a good time. And it's like a passive workout. Now it's my favourite way to prepare for a race weekend or just to have some fun in my free time. I just go and play padel. I started when I joined Ferrari – I hadn't even heard of it before, so I've only been playing for about two years. But now I have my racket and everything. So I'm taking it seriously...



Gaming

It's one of the best ways to keep in touch with my brother. Now that we live in different countries, we try to play almost every day to spend more time together, be it racing games or other ones. Sometimes we'll practice together before the next race, which is fun, but also prepares us for the next track.



Skiing

Even though I'm not allowed to, it's still high on my list. I've always loved downhill skiing. And I really miss it. I hope to be able to do it again one day, but of course racing comes first. Before I joined Ferrari, I loved to go skiing in the winter. It was one of my favourite holidays. You burn a lot of calories, so you can eat well on the slopes. And there's so much adrenaline – I really enjoyed it. But that can wait.



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No128

WORDS
DAMIEN SMITH
PICTURES
JAMES MANN

MP4/7



Regardless of championship defeat, Woking's final Honda-powered winner represents an intriguing tale of firsts as well as lasts





Time can often soften our perspective, even in the brutally stark win-or-bust world of Formula 1. Take this car. Back at the end of 1992, few within McLaren would have looked on it with a great deal of affection – not least Ayrton Senna.

MP4/7 represented an alarming fall from grace. It represented failure. The team that had scooped six of the previous eight Formula 1 constructors' crowns, the past four consecutively, was now firmly on the back foot as a rejuvenated Williams, powered by an increasingly potent Renault V10, soared into an unchartered, high-tech firmament. Nobody had a hope of living with Nigel Mansell and his Williams FW14B in 1992, not even the mighty Senna and his latest Dayglo-and-white missile from Woking.

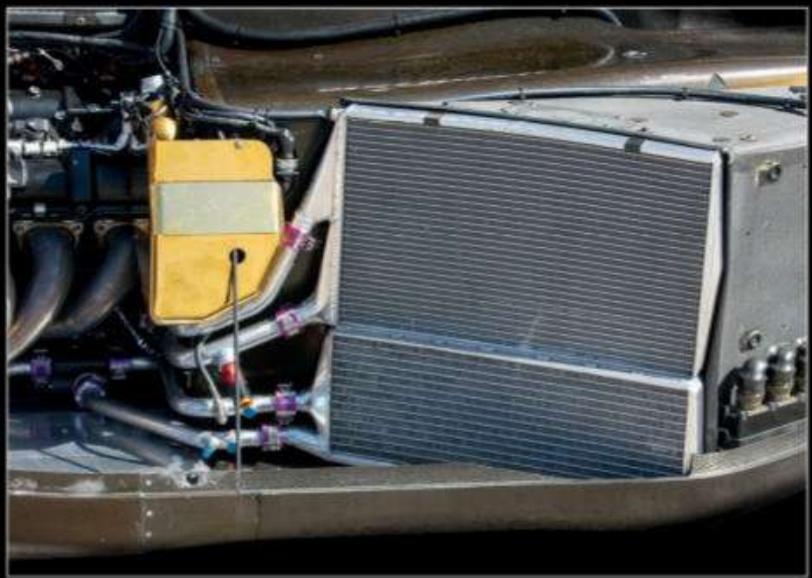


But 32 years on, MP4/7's defeat sits less uncomfortably in the context of what else it represents, particularly in terms of important firsts and lasts: it's the last race-winning McLaren powered by a Honda engine (those from the recent, unhappy era were so far off the team would probably prefer to forget them – something that won't change in time); the first to feature tech now taken for granted in F1 – semi-automatic gearbox, aerospace-inspired fly-by-wire throttle, electro-hydraulically operated suspension; and, of course, given how much he still resonates through our F1 world, this car will always be one of *his*. The deity Senna sat here, calmly fending off a frantic Mansell to equal Graham Hill's then-record as a five-time winner around Monaco. Oh yes, this is a significant F1 car – just not in the manner we'd become used to from McLaren.

But talk about mixed messages. It has been said Honda



MCLAREN MP4/7



warned Ron Dennis of its intention to withdraw from F1 long before it dropped the bombshell publicly at Monza in September 1992, but for most within the team it came as a shock. "It was September before we were aware of it," confirms Neil Oatley, MP4/7's chief designer and still today a full-time consultant at McLaren. "Certainly Martin Whitmarsh" – long-time lieutenant to McLaren's chief – "wasn't aware until then. I think, although he may deny it, Ron actually knew quite a bit earlier but was convinced he could encourage Honda to carry on. Obviously that didn't come to pass and it did create a bit of panic that autumn for the following year."

Yet despite its impending departure, Honda was still working flat out to respond to the gauntlet thrown down by Renault. It didn't give up... even as it was in the process of doing precisely that. A year earlier, it had chosen to go from V10 to V12 for the MP4/6, in an attempt to combat the powerplay coming from the French V10. Now once again it committed to the design and development of another new engine. Oatley describes the 1992 V12 as a "completely different one" as Honda fought against the turning tide.

"In those days our skill at assimilating and assessing the power and chassis implications wasn't nearly as good as it is now," Oatley explains. "Honda was keen to go for big power numbers. I'm not so sure we wouldn't have been better staying with the V10 and evolving that from the end of 1990. But the first V12 was fine.

"It was bigger, heavier, used more fuel and required more cooling than the V10, so there were downsides for the chassis. But for 1992 I think they would have been better trying to evolve the engine we had in 1991. There were some good reasons for it, but mainly it was chasing those big power numbers. The opposition, it was felt, were outperforming us but I'm not so sure it was a big difference."

The 60-degree RA121E of 1991 did carry Senna over the line to secure his third, last and arguably most impressive world crown. But the effort to defeat the rising threat from Williams and Mansell perhaps contributed to the new RA122E/B V12, with its widened 75-degree vee, running late. It wasn't even bench-tested until the December of 1991. The target was 740bhp, up 20bhp on its predecessor – although as Oatley confirms, it took some time for that number to be achieved.

From pre-season testing in 1992, Dennis was nettled. He'd seen how strong Williams had become, its FW14B ➤

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bristling with fully operational active ride suspension – and it was also reliable. To have any chance of combating the threat, McLaren had to accelerate hard to introduce its new car. But the engine delay meant the team was forced to start the season with an updated 1991 car, MP4/6B, which turned out for the opening pair of races in South Africa and Mexico – without a positive return.

At Kyalami, for the first race back in the country since the partial lifting of apartheid, Mansell and team-mate Riccardo Patrese confirmed the worst fears, with an all too easy one-two.

Mansell led every lap, and while Senna kept at bay the new irrepressible force that was Michael Schumacher – starting his first full F1 season with Benetton – the Brazilian was still a depressing 34s down on the winner. Uh-oh.

Worse was to come for Senna in Mexico City, where for the second year running he crashed heavily, losing the car over the infamous bumps and hurting himself in a sizeable impact during practice. He did at least start, but again Mansell and Patrese were in a race of their own. Ayrton's only lasted until lap 11 when

his transmission failed. Meanwhile, Schumacher secured the first of his 155 podium finishes.

MP4/7 couldn't come soon enough, and it arrived in time for Senna's home race in São Paulo. "The new car had done very little testing before we went to Brazil," says Oatley. "Because the first few races went around in one loop the old cars all went to Brazil on the FOCA shipment, then the new ones went too – so we had six cars in the garage, and I think we ran all six at various times over that weekend."

On first contact at a race weekend, Senna was immediately underwhelmed by the new McLaren. He complained of

ON FIRST CONTACT AT A RACE WEEKEND, SENNA WAS IMMEDIATELY UNDERWHELMED BY THE NEW MCLAREN

MCLAREN MP4/7

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unpredictable handling into fast corners, while there was a sense the new engine offered little more than the old one, despite its pneumatic valve actuation facilitating higher revs. Meanwhile, Mansell continued to blaze away. He qualified a full two seconds ahead of Senna in P3, then that lack of mileage told in the race as the pair of MP4/7s wilted. Gerhard Berger was out after four laps (electrics), Senna after 17 (engine). Schumacher again made the podium.

As Honda pressed on to combat the Renault threat, McLaren went above and beyond to keep up its end of the bargain, through innovation. First up, MP4/7 marked a departure from a production practice dating back to its first carbon-fibre composite design, John Barnard's original MP4 from 1981. Instead of being constructed from a 'male' mould, the new model was born from a 'female'. Oatley explains why.

"The male mould restricted you a little on the freedom of shape. Also we felt the car would be a little bit lighter if we could make a female mould and not have separate body panels creating the aerodynamic shapes. That was the main driving force, and there was a little bit of a fashion factor at play. All the other cars came from female moulds as well."

"A male-mould car is quite easy to laminate and you can make the chassis quicker than with a female mould, but we felt there were aero advantages going to the other route. I wouldn't





say it was a night-and-day difference, but it was trending."

Barnard's Ferrari 640 had ushered in the first semi-auto gearbox back in 1989, and now finally McLaren – which in fairness hadn't needed the reliability risk given its turn-of-the-decade dominance – introduced its own: a transverse six-speed with the company's own electro-hydraulic activation devised in partnership with TAG. "We actually built a prototype in 1991 and ran it in practice in Hungary," says Oatley. "That was just a first attempt, it worked quite well, but had a pneumatic rather than hydraulic system and it wasn't very reliable, so we felt hydraulics was a better way to go in the future. We put it to one

side in 1991 and concentrated on building a hydraulic system incorporated with the engine for 1992."

The fly-by-wire throttle replaced a throttle cable with a system controlled by electronic sensors, which by monitoring and responding directly to a driver's pedal inputs empowered the control of engine speeds automatically, and allowed the driver to keep his foot flat to the floor while shifting up and down. "That was a Honda project, around which the engine was conceived and designed," says Oatley. "It needed bigger electronic motors and was fairly novel at the time. It really didn't give too much of a problem, although there was an issue

for Ayrton at the car's first race in Brazil. There was a problem with the control system where he could have almost no throttle or full throttle and not much transition between the two.

"He was holding up a big train of cars in the race, much to Schumacher's anger. But he had full power on the straight so he was able to keep cars behind him even though it was hard to control in the corners. That was really the only problem we had in the whole year, so it worked quite well."

What about the traction control system? "It was early days and fairly rudimentary. It was pretty much under Honda's control because we used their electronics and it was only really in 1993 that we started to use our own electronic systems and that gave us more freedom. That was a bit more of a step change the following year. But we had a very good working relationship between ourselves, the drivers and Honda. For MP4/7 we used our own control system for the gearbox, piggybacked on to the engine to control the throttle for shifting gear and the two interacted quite well."

After Interlagos, the Mansell run continued with further victories in Barcelona and Imola making it five out of five for the Englishman, a new record surpassing Senna's four from four the previous year. But at Monaco Senna's luck turned.

Having led from pole until lap 71 of 78, Mansell experienced a big twitch in the tunnel and suspected a puncture. In he came for a tyre change, setting up the famous chase to the chequered flag. Watch it back and you'll notice there's

no weaving and no nasty chops from Senna. It's Monaco – he just needs to keep to his line. Even 32 years ago, when F1 car proportions were far more in check than today, overtaking at Monaco was a near-impossibility.

"Monaco does really stand out as the high point of the year," says Oatley. "OK, it was due to Mansell having a puncture that created that situation at the end, but Ayrton did a fantastic job on fairly well-used tyres to hold him at bay for those last few laps."

But other wins followed. The Williams 'slump' continued in Montréal, where Mansell tripped up at the chicane trying to pass Senna. The FW14B was left prone in the middle of the track on the pit straight facing oncoming traffic. Mansell sat in the car until a marshal ran out to his aid, then lifted himself from the cockpit just as the field streamed past – at unabated speed despite the yellow flags. The moustachioed Brummie

SECOND IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP, FIVE RACE WINS AND A BUNCH OF MEMORABLE SENNA MOMENTS

MCLAREN MP4/7

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gesticulated his displeasure at the passing Senna, as the marshal risked life and limb. No safety cars back in 1992 – and to modern eyes it looks so perilous.

Back in the pitlane, Mansell gave his two cents to Dennis on the pitwall, before responding to a TV reporter's request for comment: "Call himself a world champion? I hope you saw that on television." But he was to enjoy a sense of schadenfreude: Senna's electronics packed up on lap 38, leaving team-mate Berger to inherit a win.

Normal service resumed for Mansell at Magny-Cours, where Schumacher gave notice of much that was to follow over the course of the next two decades when he collided with Senna at the hairpin. Before the restart, Senna – now in civvies – is filmed in earnest conversation with the young German (is that a smirk on his face? Surely not.) and angrily swats away the microphone of a cheeky earwiggling reporter. Benetton's Flavio Briatore and Pat Symonds, plus Schumacher's manager Willi Weber, hover nervously, perhaps anticipating fisticuffs that never materialise (this time).

High stress for Senna, then. But he did win two more races, in Hungary – where Mansell was confirmed as champion, in August – and at Monza, while Berger picked up another victory in his final race for McLaren, in Adelaide, before he returned to Ferrari. That secured McLaren second in the constructors' championship, eight points clear of Benetton – but a massive 65 down on Williams. By now, Senna was already touting himself for Frank's team, sensationally offering himself as team-mate to incoming Alain Prost for free (as if), while a flouncing Mansell prepared to defend his title... in IndyCar.

No wonder it's hardly a year Oatley remembers with particular fondness. "Obviously the Williams was a pretty accomplished car that year, although Ayrton still won three races which is not to be sniffed at. But most of those were slightly inherited, so there was a lot of frustration, probably more so with the engine rather than the chassis. The Renault was a better engine and Williams had developed an effective active ride system, so they were able to exploit their aerodynamics to a greater extent than we were."



"It was probably only from around the French GP the engine power was better than the previous year. If we'd kept the previous year's engine without touching it we'd have been more competitive in those early races. It took a long time to catch up, and it was only towards the end of the year it was performing quite well. It wasn't all bad, it just wasn't a guaranteed race winner as previous McLarens had been. But you're always learning and evolving when things go badly as much as when they go well."

A disaffected 'wantaway' Senna... no more Honda... only a Cosworth V8 customer engine for 1993... playing second fiddle to works Ford team Benetton... After so many years of glory, prospects suddenly looked bleak. Little did Oatley and his fellow engineers know that McLaren was about to shine in an unfamiliar underdog role, with an MP4/7 successor now venerated as one of the team's finest achievements.

"We were designing the next car not knowing whether it would have a V8, V10 or V12 and it wasn't until probably late October, beginning of November that the Cosworth deal was signed," recalls Oatley. "Ayrton wasn't very committed until a couple of weeks before South Africa [in 1993]. Luckily he was reasonably pleased when he first drove the MP4/8 at Silverstone. He was really struck by the characteristics of

the engine in comparison to the Honda the year before.

"Obviously there was a power difference, but the drivability was so much easier. The last V12 had a lot of friction, so when you lifted off the throttle it felt like you'd stamped on the brakes because of the engine drag. Whereas with the Cosworth you would come off the throttle and sort of glide into the corners, enabling the driver to be much more precise in how he handled the car. What you lost in top-end power you gained in those characteristics."

Second in the championship, five race wins and a bunch of memorable Senna moments: there have been plenty of cars in our series with far worse records of achievement. The trouble for MP4/7 is that it was a Marlboro McLaren-Honda that with hindsight marked the start of a downturn that would only properly be addressed five years later, with Ilmor-built Mercedes V10 power, Adrian Newey newly arrived from Williams and a determined equal to Schumacher in the form of Mika Häkkinen. After MP4/7, F1 fortunes for McLaren would get a lot worse before they got better. 

RACE RECORD

Starts 28

Wins 5

Podiums 6

Pole positions 1

Fastest laps 2

Championship points 90

SPECIFICATION

Chassis High-modulus carbon fibre/honeycomb monocoque

Suspension Double wishbones with pushrod-actuated longitudinal inboard coil springs/dampers

Engine Honda RA122E/B V12

Engine capacity 3493cc

Power 740bhp @ 14,500rpm

Gearbox McLaren semi-automatic transverse six-speed

Brakes Carbon fibre discs

Tyres Goodyear

Weight 506kg

Notable drivers Ayrton Senna, Gerhard Berger



Watch a grand prix on television for long enough and you'll surely hear a race engineer on the team radio, the soothing yin to their driver's often abrupt and emotional yang. But what do they do for the rest of the weekend?

Gary Gannon, race engineer for Nico Hülkenberg at Haas, reveals all

WORDS OLEG KARPOV

PICTURES MARK SUTTON

 motorsport
IMAGES

THE RACE ENGINEER



Gannon will always be Hulk's first point of contact

You know the drill: the 'team radio' banner pops up on screen and, a second or two later, amid crackles and the aural backdrop of engine blare, a driver's voice emerges – generally raised in a tone of tetchy complaint, sometimes at an outright screaming pitch. The voice that responds is usually altogether more measured, both in tone and content, delivering the likes of "copy" or "understood" (or indeed some other variant of "just shut up and drive the car") in the manner of an airline pilot informing the cabin crew to take their seats for landing.

This is the voice of the race engineer. Yet they are not just there to act as a verbal punchbag for those occasions when the tyre strategy hasn't worked out. The race engineer is the first point of contact for any

driver, since it's their job to 'run' the car with them, trying to turn the stream of thoughts of their closest colleagues into a decent setup that can help both achieve a better result.

They're the ones who have an overview of what's happening with the car throughout the weekend, from the time it's fired up on Thursday until it crosses the line on Sunday. It's their job to know the strengths and weaknesses not only of their cars, but also their drivers, in order to get the best out of that combination.

That's why it's often said the relationship with the race engineer is vital for the drivers.

Gary Gannon's weekend at Imola was always going to be challenging for a number of reasons. The fact that his driver, Nico Hülkenberg, had never raced there was one of them – but the pair was also tasked with carrying out an important test during practice to help the team assess its new aero package.

Here's how it panned out...

THURSDAY

08.45

Engineering meetings

“There’s no running on Thursday, but it’s still a very busy day in terms of setting up for the weekend. After arriving and a quick breakfast, I usually go straight into an array of meetings with different groups, starting with IT to check that all the systems are working, then electronics: since we had a lot of test equipment on the car, it was an important one, but the guys did a good job of preparing everything. Then I had a meeting with our Ferrari engineers to give us any kind of limitations for the weekend. Nothing too special, but they did remind us about the bumps in the track – especially in turns 12 and 14 – because you can’t upshift with wheelspin as it’s bad for the gearbox, so we have to remind the drivers.

“Then at nine o’clock we had our big pre-race meeting, which is run by the factory and lasts about 45 minutes. We’re in our engineering room, but it’s them who give us their expectations for the weekend in terms of tyres, setup, aero, weather and strategy. The main takeaways were: although previously the right-front was a limitation at Imola due to graining, with the new construction of the fronts it should shift to the rear

being a limitation. This affects the setup, the driving style and the way we need to manage the tyres. Then the aero guys briefed us on how the new package is supposed to work and all the tests they want us to do. Strategy-wise, it’s pretty straightforward: with a pitstop loss of 28 seconds, the only real option is a one-stop race.

“We then sat down with our performance engineer, Marty, and went through a number of setup ideas we had worked on earlier in the week.”

12.30

Catch up with Nico

“We then met up with Nico in our hospitality area. Typically on Thursday it starts with lunch together and jokes and inter-group banter, which is always fun – but then it quickly turns into a serious meeting. We have a Zoom call every week so he’s always aware of our plans. This time he knew there’d be sensors on the car to help the team assess the upgrade. So we asked him to sacrifice a couple of runs – but even though he’s never raced here, it was an easy sell because it helps the team move forward.”

13.30

Fire up

“Exactly 24 hours before FP1 we fire up the car for the first time during the weekend. Normally I’m not too involved, but I like to be in the



After a catch up with Hülkenberg on Thursday where they discussed ideas for FP2, Gannon listens to his driver ahead of running in Friday’s first practice

garage to make sure everything goes smoothly, and this time it didn’t go to plan. We fitted a new engine that wasn’t yet part of our allocation and I could see it was starting to take a lot of time, so I got more involved.

“We spoke to our Ferrari engineer, Claudio, and because we found a small sensor issue, we decided to change the engine – just as a precaution. That meant that instead of getting the car ready and doing our legality checks, we proceeded with an engine change. The guys started at around 3pm and finished at 6.30pm and we were able to do the fire-ups just before curfew. We were hoping to get the floor on the car as well, but in the end we didn’t have enough time, so we put it off until the next morning.”

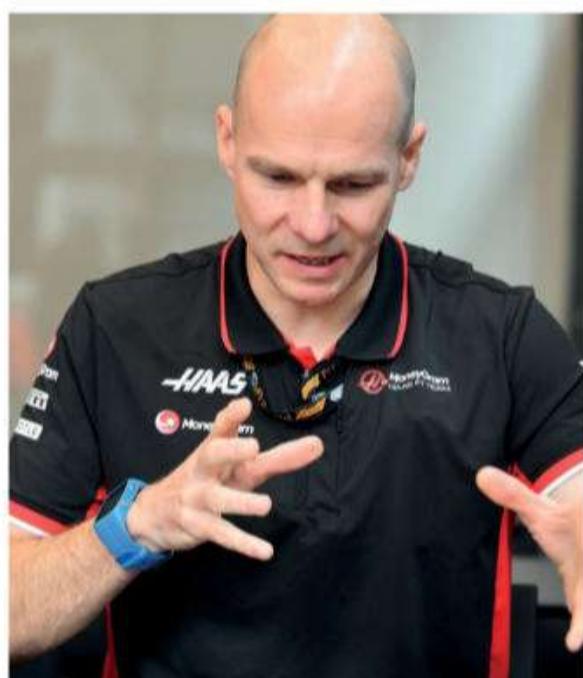
14.30

Run programme meetings

“While I was keeping an eye on what was going on in the garage, I had a couple of other meetings. At 2pm we had radio and system checks, then at 2.30pm another technical meeting where we go through the exact run programme. Then another meeting with Pirelli, basically to confirm our expectations about the limitations of the tyres for the weekend. And then another chat with Marty about the setup.

“When we met with Nico, we came up with some new ideas we could try in FP2. The engine change gave us the opportunity to make them. Some things require the gearbox to be taken off and the internals removed and put back together, and what we had in mind would take an hour and involve Ferrari mechanics as well as our own, so it’s not a decision to be taken lightly. I didn’t want to take the car apart for that. But since we changed the engine anyway, we decided to go ahead with it.

“I was in constant discussion with our number-one mechanic Matt about Friday’s morning job list and what we could and couldn’t try. I had a list of what I wanted to do – but we dropped a few things because we didn’t think we’d have enough time to do them all.”



“STRATEGY-WISE, IT’S PRETTY STRAIGHTFORWARD: WITH A PITSTOP LOSS OF 28 SECONDS, THE ONLY REAL OPTION IS A ONE-STOP RACE”

FRIDAY

09.15

Arrival at the track

“Friday morning was supposed to be about catching up on the things we hadn’t been able to do the day before, but more problems arose. We had an issue with the water pump and, instead of doing all the work we’d missed on Thursday, we had to worry about whether we’d be able to run in the first session at all.

“We got it recovered. The guys put the car together and did all the fire-ups by 12, so at 12.30 – for our usual run plan meeting – we were sure we could start the session.”

13.30

Free practice 1

“We had a clear plan in place on Thursday, with three runs for FP1: the first with big rake to check the aero performance of the new package, the second with smaller rake to get more data, and then the final run with no rake to cross-compare the cars.

“What happened in reality was very different. The first run went as planned. We asked Nico to stay off the kerbs – because you don’t want to shake the big structure – and not to use DRS. And it went quite well. The second run was first interrupted by red flags, so we lost some time – but then we lost even more because as soon as we came back out, the aero engineer reported that he wasn’t getting any data from the rakes, and then two other people reported that their channels weren’t working either.

“We boxed and tried to investigate the problem, but then more electrical issues occurred and we couldn’t fix them, only to find out later that it was because one of the looms was trapped by the bodywork and damaged. Anyway, we had to abandon the second run with the rakes. We took it off and did the last run, so we had the data to compare the two packs.”



The second run in FP1 with rakes on Nico’s car didn’t go well because of issues with the electrics

17.00

Free practice 2

“The second session was a more typical one with low and high-fuel runs, but as soon as we went out we discovered the ride was terrible, also because of the bumps – it was worse than in 2022, so we had already tried to rethink the approach – and Nico reported there was something wrong with the car on ride.

“Ultimately, it was related to a setup change we made on Thursday when we decided to change the engine as well. It was a specific suspension setting and, basically, we made a mistake and instead of

making the car softer as intended, it actually made the ride terrible.

“The guys tried to understand it with the data but fortunately, as soon as I explained the symptoms to the mechanics, they were able to say, ‘Ah, we know what it is’ – so we were able to fix it very quickly and get the car out again. However, our first run, which was supposed to be seven laps on mediums, ended up being two laps. Luckily, then Nico was able to do a couple more laps on mediums to get a better feel for the car – and we were actually quite happy with the revised setup.

“We then went out as planned for a high-fuel run, a couple of laps

fewer than planned because of the time lost earlier.”

20.30

Friday evening technical meeting

“We had a quick debrief after the second session, but then we always have a big meeting late on Friday with the guys from our factories in Italy and UK. They gave us all their assessments of the setup changes we had made and the first discoveries after comparing two packages. A lot of things worked well, but a few didn’t, which made us want to investigate further.”

On Friday evening the team always has a big technical meeting with the Haas factories in the UK and Italy



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SATURDAY

06.15

Catch up with the performance engineer

"Last night – after the engineering meeting – I made a big list of setup changes we wanted to consider. So in the morning Marty and I met at the hotel for a couple of hours, to go through all the ideas and changes we might make, and to make sure that when we got to the track we were ready to work on the changes.

"We left for the track at 8.15am, and should have been here by 9.15 – instead we arrived at 9.27 because of the traffic. We had two minutes for breakfast and then went straight into the meeting, which was about the setup between the two cars, sharing what we're doing. It's always interesting to know what the other car is doing with the ride height, downforce levels, etc.

"By the time it was done, Nico was already at the track, so we were able to talk to him over breakfast to



finalise a particular setup change we'd talked about the night before but hadn't made a decision on."

12.30

Free practice 3

"FP3 was basically Nico's first chance to work on the qualifying simulation and the session went well. We went out on mediums and Nico was able to do some timed laps. But with the car changing and the wind direction as well, he was a bit off compared to Kevin – and then the session was red-flagged.

"At that point we could have gone to softs or back to mediums – and after talking to him we decided to do the latter. He's seen the data by then, he knows what to adjust, and he went out and found all the missing time immediately, which is always impressive with Nico. So we ended up 10th, but he was still a bit nervous going into qualifying that we weren't competitive because a lot of cars weren't getting laps together, so we should have been around P14.

"So, after a debrief he came up with ideas of what he wanted to change on the car – and we had to go through every one of them. Have we got all the downforce we need? Should we go lighter? And in those moments, sometimes it's important to resist the temptation to try and make things better by making radical changes. Because you can easily make the car worse."

16.00

Qualifying

"We made some mechanical changes in the end but we kept the same level of downforce, and went into qualifying a bit apprehensive, not sure where it was going to end up. And the first run wasn't great. Just a bit scrappy on his side, but the great thing about Nico is that he knows that – and he told us right away: 'I'm going to clean that up.' So there's no need to change the car. And he went out again and did a monster lap, which put him in P1, which became P3 at the end of Q1.

"Then Q2 – another amazing second run, which got us back into Q3. And then in the final we probably didn't get the most out of it. We used scrubbed tyres on the first run, but that can be distracting because you lose some references. But P10 in the end was also not too bad.

"After a debrief, I usually go and look at all the sets of tyres we've run, just in case we need to use them in the race – to see if there are any cuts, abrasions, to find the ones we need to keep in case we need them on Sunday. This time we probably wouldn't need them anyway, unless there's some sort of crazy red-flag, Safety-Car scenario at the end, but it's always important to keep track for occasions like last year in Melbourne.

"Then we had a summary meeting at 7pm, which was pretty straightforward this time since there was nothing too mysterious about the cars. So we really just talked about strategy expectations for Sunday's race." ▶

"Q2 – ANOTHER AMAZING SECOND RUN, WHICH GOT US BACK INTO Q3. AND THEN IN THE FINAL WE PROBABLY DIDN'T GET THE MOST OUT OF IT. WE USED SCRUBBED TYRES ON THE FIRST RUN, BUT THAT CAN BE DISTRACTING BECAUSE YOU LOSE SOME REFERENCES. BUT P10 IN THE END WAS ALSO NOT TOO BAD"





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SUNDAY: GRAND PRIX

10.00

Engineering meetings

"We talked about strategy last night, but on Sunday morning we have a final look at the plan during a short meeting between the two race engineers and strategy engineer. It's a chance to ask questions and challenge any ideas we're not sure about. But for this race the strategy was very straightforward: start on mediums, finish on hards. So there wasn't a lot of negotiating.

"Then Nico is always here early on Sundays, so he's already around asking questions about what we're going to do in the race. We had a quick discussion about the race



11.30

Strategy meeting

"This is where Faisal, our strategy engineer, goes through the strategy plan for both cars in detail: what we're going to do under the Safety Cars, what the scenarios are after the first lap and things like that.

"Then I usually go out and talk to the car crew and make sure the car is coming together correctly. This time there were no problems out there."



plan, the balance and what we expect from the tyres.

"At 10.45 we meet with Ferrari, because they manage the actual fuel mass in the car. There are a lot of things we have to think about: will the drivers have to lift and coast? Will we be in traffic? Will we have DRS? All of that determines how much fuel for the start of the race and how we're going to manage it."

14.20

Grid

"I went into the garage at 1.50pm, 30 minutes before the pitlane opens. And then the driver comes out at 2.10pm. And then we always have a quick chat about the wind direction, the track temperature, confirm how many laps to the grid we do and then decide whether we're going to be one of the first cars out or wait for a gap. So we went on the earlier side this time, we did our three laps to grid, which put us on the grid at about 2.27pm. The pitlane closed at 2.30pm.

"On the grid I always talk with Nico about the balance during these three laps, and then he goes to the toilet or somewhere before he walks to the front of the grid for the national anthem. During that time I'm talking to the other engineers, giving them Nico's feedback on the balance. It's all the usual routine.

"After that I go to the mechanics and they check the flap angle we had on the car and make sure that what we set in the garage is still there for the race start, because even though it shouldn't change at all, it's super important to know where our balance is for the race start. I'm checking the tyres with the tyre technician to make sure everything is set up correctly and they're all at the right temperature. I have a bunch of other little checks that I do.

"Mike, the controls engineer, comes out to talk to Nico about the practice starts and he also brings me overlays of the data we have on the laps to grid so I can



quickly check how our balance was compared with FP2 high fuel.

Then we have the national anthem, Nico comes back from that and we have a final talk about the balance and what we're going to do in the race. Mike talks to Nico about the starts and what he needs to do based on what we did on the laps-to-grid starts. And then with 10 minutes to go, Nico gets in the car. We put on the race start tyres and then we just slowly work through our countdown.

"The starting tyres appear on the race monitor, which Marty, the performance engineer, informs me about on the intercom, and then I tell Nico the relevant ones, like the cars around us: 'everybody's on medium and only Perez is on the soft', for example. With 30 seconds

12.30

Pre-race briefing

"Everyone talks about procedures, what we're doing on the laps to the grid, what aero balance and front wing flap we're using and we go through the strategy. The team manager will tell us if there are any special procedures from the FIA."





to go we all go off to the side and watch Nico go for his formation lap – and then I run to the garage.”

15.00

Race

“And then in the race we’re monitoring the balance, the temperatures, how the tyres are working and we’re constantly trying to help Nico improve.

“We stopped earlier than planned to cover Tsunoda and the other cars that pitted earlier than we expected, which was all triggered by Alonso pitting very early. We covered them and then, as we predicted in the pre-race, we ended up catching a slow Williams that was difficult to overtake. So we were stuck behind them for a couple of

laps. Then Tsunoda got through and we got through, so that part was OK, but we couldn’t really make any progress on Tsunoda. So we couldn’t get into the top 10 – because people who went longer on the first stint had more success, like Stroll for example.

“So, we lacked the pace to fight Tsunoda for P10. Nico did a good job of keeping the tyres alive, but we stopped earlier than planned because we had to react to the cars around us. If we hadn’t done that, maybe we could have stayed out longer and had a better second stint, but it’s difficult to be sure. So the race was OK and we did well and Nico did well, but the result was P11.

“Then we did our driver debrief, changed and went to the airport.” 

“THE RACE WAS OK AND WE DID WELL AND NICO DID WELL, BUT THE RESULT WAS P11”



MAURICE HAMILTON'S ALTERNATIVE VIEW

Pieces of eight? Yes, all the way down to 12th place. Has Polly gone crackers? Perhaps.

Our man asks if, in its quest to reach *Treasure Island*, Formula 1 has gone down a rabbit hole instead...

PICTURES  motorsport IMAGES

I'M GUESSING THAT LIBERTY MEDIA must have formed a 'Formula 1 Book Club'. It makes sense. With a massive F1 calendar and so many flights between races, the book club has been established to help team principals while away the hours between bouts of business interrupted by sending their cars on track to run in a DRS train for 90 minutes every other Sunday. *Alice in Wonderland* appears to be required reading, along with *Treasure Island* and *Where's Wally* (a special F1 edition for the US market in which Wally, when found, is obliterated and not allowed to join in).

It seems to me that someone in authority must have been reading Lewis Carroll's celebrated story of Alice, who falls through a rabbit hole and enters a fantasy world. This F1 influencer has clearly been enthused by the plot, particularly the bit where one of the characters (appropriately named 'Dodo') suggested a race. When the Dodo suddenly declared the race to be over, the participants naturally wished to know who had won. Initially flummoxed by such a reasonable question, the Dodo magnanimously declared: "Everybody has won – and all must have prizes!"

And there you have it. The F1 Sporting Regulations will need to be read in conjunction



In the very first world championship F1 race, the 1950 British GP, Louis Rosier was the final points scorer when he claimed two points for finishing fifth in his Talbot-Lago

with *Alice in Wonderland* now that some F1 Dodo has decided to award points to 12th place – and possibly beyond. Who knows where this might end? A championship point for simply turning up (with TWO cars, of course)? A bonus point for putting forward the most vacuous 'Celebrity' for interview on the grid? How about the mechanic with the best tattoo on their left forearm? Or the driver who says most often:

"Dunno. Should be a good race. Let's see what happens" when questioned while on their way to the grid. Certainly, if the F1 Dodo succeeds, it will no longer be worth a driver or team principal wishfully saying: "We hope to score a point." That will become as easy having your loyalty card stamped at Costa on a Sunday afternoon.

The distribution of points has had various iterations since the inception of the F1 world

POINTS SHOULD BE HARD WON AND SAVOURED; NOT HANDED OUT LIKE CONSOLATION CHOCOLATE BUTTONS AT THE END OF A KIDS' EGG-AND-SPOON RACE



Perhaps championship points could be awarded for the celebrities who most look as if Martin Brundle is attempting to get them to sign up to a monthly charity direct debit?

championship in 1950. For the first ten years, the top five finishers received points on the sliding scale 8-6-4-3-2. There were many occasions when it seemed they couldn't give the points away, such was the woeful reliability and the handful of finishers struggling across the line, often miles apart in cars barely hanging together.

Over time, the reward for winning was increased to nine, and then 10 points, with the spread going down to sixth place. In 2003, the first eight finishers received points. Then, in 2010, the value of earning points became diluted

– not to mention consigning facts of statistical point-scoring significance to the bin – when a more generous system gave the winner 25 points, diminishing to a single point for 10th.

Granted, finishing 10th is not easy given the exceptional reliability of today's cars. But it will be difficult to get enthused about seeing team members giving each other high fives after trailing in 12th, a lap down and a minute off the pace. Ron Dennis used to say that finishing second was the first of the losers. In which case, finishing 12th will be the equivalent of being declared runner-up



Kevin Magnussen has been a busy man this year either defending madly for 10th, or keeping cars behind him to help his team-mate finish in the points

in a miserable contest for runners-up.

Arguing for this expansion of the scoring system, one team principal in charge of a midfield runner complained about the difficulty explaining to their financial partners that the battle for P11 actually gains zero points. Having initially been puzzled by the absurdity of such an argument in a sport that has – or should have – a desire to be the very best as its core value, it's tempting to think that the avoidance of such a conversation is actually a good thing and prevents the team principal from looking even more silly than he really is. The recommendation to dish out championship points willy-nilly would surely have any CEO of a successful sponsor remind the F1 boss that if the Chancellor of the Exchequer prints 10 times as much cash, the nation does not thereby become richer. On the contrary, the currency is devalued by inflation.

And that's another thing. It's not as if this suggestion by the F1 Dodo is going to add to the wealth fund of whoever finishes 12th. The existing financial divi-up is already established by your finishing position, be that ninth or 19th. In fact, an existing commercial agreement says the FIA receives a fee from the teams and drivers based on the points they score. Thus, in return for doing very little, the governing body will be in line for a bigger financial slice to help the cost of producing finishers' medals which nobody really wants (except for the profiling president handing them out on the podium).

We're talking about a significant world championship in the spectrum of global sport. Championship points should be hard won and savoured; not handed out like consolation chocolate buttons at the end of a kids' egg-and-spoon race. If this continues then, given the current climate of being offended over the merest slight, the team coming home 18th or 19th will be taking legal action thanks to feeling morally entitled to championship points simply because they've finished the race and avoided being punted off by Kevin Magnussen.

Meritocracy isn't an add-on extra that can be demanded as if by right. It should remain the principal reason for getting up in the morning on race day and going to the grid in the knowledge there can only be one winner. Take the F1 Dodo's latest proposal to its illogical conclusion and the sport is on its way down the rabbit hole into a fantasy world that bears no relation to why most of us are there in the first place.



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FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 7

THE EMILIA ROMAGNA GP IN 5 KEY MOMENTS

REPORT BY JAMES ROBERTS



PICTURES: STEVEN TEE; ZAK MAUGER; MARK SUTTON; MAX VERSTAPPEN INSTAGRAM

Verstappen's Imola win looked in doubt in the closing stages when Norris was on a charge



Max also won the virtual Nürburgring 24 Hours with Team Redline across the F1 weekend

While this might seem a peculiar and potentially focus-sapping endeavour during a GP weekend, it demonstrates how much Verstappen loves racing. And the fact that he was allowed to do it indicates how much power he holds within the organisation. Beyond leisure pursuits, though, the use of a

simulator was central to Red Bull's victory at Imola.

During Friday practice, the world champion wasn't happy with the balance of his RB20. A couple of times he ran off the road and, at Acque Minerali in particular, he couldn't get the nose of his Red Bull to turn-in. Le Mans winner and former Toro Rosso driver Sébastien Buemi – who shares simulator duties for the team with Formula E chum Jake Dennis – was called in to the Milton Keynes factory on Friday night and pulled an all-nighter in the sophisticated on-site rig. This is no PlayStation. Eleven hours later the required setup changes were fed back to the Autodromo Enzo e Dino Ferrari and, with less downforce on the car, Max was able to sneak pole – thanks in part to a tow down to Tamburello from Nico Hülkenberg's Haas.

But the team had opted against doing a long run on hard tyres on Friday as it focused on curing the balance problems, so it lacked crucial data on their

1 Max's virtual insanity

It's not uncommon for NASCAR drivers to participate in two races in one weekend (or the occasional post-race punch-up). It's also been known for racers to cross disciplines and start the Indianapolis 500 in the afternoon and jump on a jet to compete in the Coca-Cola 600 later in the day. But it's rare indeed for F1 drivers to submit to what might be viewed as "distractions" – unless, of course, they're at the top of their game in their primary job.

When Max Verstappen crossed the finish line to win the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix with McLaren's Lando Norris in his wheeltracks, Red Bull team boss Christian Horner congratulated Max for his second triumph of the weekend. The previous evening – and on race day morning – Verstappen was at the wheel of his simulator rig, sharing the driving duties with his three Team Redline team-mates, to win the virtual Nürburgring 24 Hours.

characteristics. As a result Max didn't 'introduce' his new tyres with the requisite care and, in the latter stages of the race, he found the fronts losing their bite – exacerbated when his Pirells fell out of the operating-temperature window while he was lapping backmarkers. Behind him, Lando Norris was on a charge, eating up chunks of time to the leading Red Bull as he reaped the benefits of treading carefully during his opening laps on the hard-compound rubber.

At the start of the race, Max had pulled out a comfortable six-second gap by the time of the pitstops and it looked as if Norris had to settle for the runner-up spot. But the race came alive in the closing stages as the British driver ragged his papaya car to the limit.

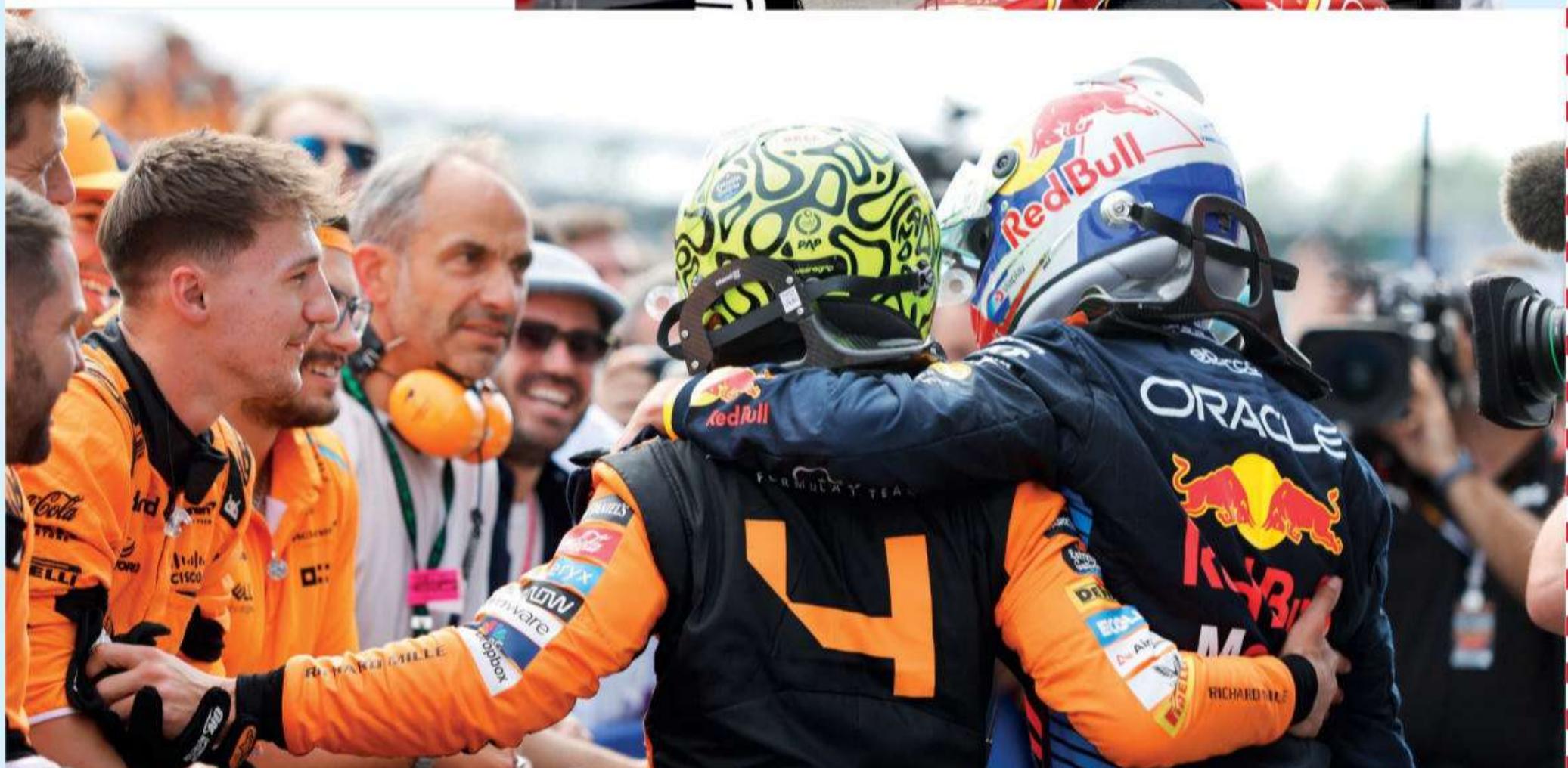
By using his battery to stop Lando getting within the DRS detection point, Max just held on – by 0.725s – but in the final two laps the RB20 had run out of electrical power. He was also driving with the utmost precision thanks to a black and white warning flag for track limits. It would have been fascinating if the race was just a single lap longer, since Norris did grab DRS on his final lap.

The second Red Bull of Sergio Pérez was nearly a minute behind the winner. After going off the track to bring out the red flag in FP3 and starting 11th, the Mexican ran an alternate strategy, starting on hards and switching to the mediums for the final stint. He finished a distant eighth.

While Pérez's future is the subject of much speculation, Christian Horner was surprisingly supportive, describing this as "just a blip", and saying the team's simulations had suggested seventh was the best achievable position from 11th in an uninterrupted race.

"He had one trip through the gravel that cost him about six seconds, but that was about the maximum that he could get from that grid position."

Norris took a lot of risks in the last few laps to try and back up his Miami win, but in the end Verstappen was able to hold him off



2 The threat from McLaren and Ferrari is building

Lando Norris has always shown a good turn of speed at Imola but, on Saturday, it was his McLaren team-mate Oscar Piastri who impressed – missing out on pole position by just 0.074s. Ultimately his time was made redundant when he picked up a three-place grid penalty for impeding Kevin Magnussen's Haas. But with Norris only 0.091s in arrears of Verstappen's pole time, the pace has given the Woking team encouragement its recent upgrades – the full suite of which Piastri had for the first time this weekend – are continuing to take the MCL38 in the right direction.

In the race, Piastri was bottled up behind Carlos Sainz's fourth-placed Ferrari in the opening stint and, despite having DRS, was unable to muscle his way past. When Oscar pitted on lap 24, he subsequently put in the fastest lap of the race – a 1m19.9s – and comfortably emerged ahead of

Sainz (who pitted four laps later). For a moment, it looked as if Piastri might even challenge Charles Leclerc ahead of him, but the Ferrari became more of a threat to Lando in second.

During the first stint Leclerc had shadowed second-placed Norris, hovering within a two-second window which prompted McLaren to pit first (on lap 22) to counter the undercut threat. This came at the risk of losing track position to the Red Bull of Sergio Pérez, who was running a long first stint on hard tyres, but Lando made short work of him with DRS. Still, he couldn't get comfortable: by lap 41, Leclerc was just 1.3s behind the McLaren and closing in as they battled through the traffic. Norris felt the traffic cost him tyre temperature, requiring several setting changes on the steering wheel to make the car less 'pointy'.

Six laps later, Leclerc made a mistake under braking at the Variante Alta and cut across the grass at the top of the hill. Thereafter the threat to Lando disappeared and Charles had to settle for third while the McLaren went in pursuit of Verstappen.

"It was clear that we struggled a bit too much at

After shadowing Norris for much of the race Leclerc had to settle for third at the finish





FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 7

the beginning," conceded Norris. "I felt like we did a better job controlling the tyres and the pace in the second half of the race. Charles got very close to me, but I had to resist and not over-drive. When I got the tyres into a good window, I could push and then I was flying again.

"At the end I was taking a lot of risks and I almost went off about five or six times into the gravel," he added. "When you're in the car catching the leader, you're thinking about how you can make half a tenth or trying not to make a mistake and be perfect. I was pushing as much as I could."

3 Russell loses out to Hamilton

There were a few subtle changes to the Imola circuit this year. Modifications included the removal of the asphalt run-off at both Piratella and Acque Minerali, while an extra gravel trap was added at

'Gresini' – also known as Turn 15 – the exit of the Variante Alta chicane.

The reduction in run-off on the narrow course meant mistakes by drivers were punished. One of the most surprising 'offs' befell Lewis Hamilton, who joined his experienced rivals Sergio Pérez and Fernando Alonso in running off the track over the Imola weekend.

Hamilton locked up his front-right and headed straight into the gravel trap on the exit of Acque Minerali on lap 26. In the end, he was classified sixth, but only after his Mercedes team-mate George Russell was called in to switch to a two-stopper. At the point of Hamilton's error, Russell was ahead. And while the team benefitted as a whole, by gaining an extra point for the fastest lap, Russell was bemused by why he had to concede a place.

"George, would you be happy with stopping if we lost a position to Lewis?" said his engineer Marcus Dudley on team radio. "We have a window to Pérez [who had now bolted on the medium tyre

and was starting to catch the Mercedes pair] that is still open."

"Yeah, happy, but would we do a switch at the end," replied Russell, asking whether his sixth position would be returned to him. "Negative," said Dudley in response.

"Why would we bother? I don't get that, I don't want to concede a position for no reason," continued Russell.

"We're concerned about getting these tyres to the end," said his engineer. The decision not to 'invert' the two Mercedes runners later was based on risk, since there was 12-second gap between the pair. Plus Hamilton might still have advanced further if anyone ahead of him were forced to slow.

After the race Russell put a brave face on the decision and, while it did benefit the team in the final outcome, the apparent unfairness of it did excite much comment.

4 Alonso has an off weekend

Fernando Alonso had a most uncharacteristic weekend at Imola. He hit the wall in Saturday morning practice at the slippery Rivazza, and his repaired Aston Martin didn't give him the balance he needed for qualifying. He dropped out of Q1 with the slowest time.

Alonso started the race from the pitlane and with overtaking difficult at the narrow Italian track, he was effectively out of contention for the 63-lap encounter. When he made his first pitstop he reported his brakes were on fire and, as he accelerated out onto the track, the air managed to extinguish the flames coming from his front-left brake duct.

With a few laps to go he pitted to stick on a set of softs and attempted the wrestle the fastest-lap point away from Russell's Mercedes – but even failed in that task. It was an especially disappointing outcome for Aston Martin since the team had brought a raft of upgrades including a new front wing and revised underfloor furniture.

In contrast, credit must go to Yuki Tsunoda, who enjoyed a stellar weekend in his Visa Cash App-sponsored machine. After the suffering wrought by the floods in this region last year, the Japanese driver gave something for the local, Faenza-based team to cheer about with an inspired performance over the weekend. Despite a poor start from his



Russell was somewhat surprised to be asked by the team to switch with Hamilton mid-race



Imola was a race Alonso will want to forget, after qualifying 20th and finishing 19th

BOSS

season-best seventh on the grid, a long second stint netted him the final points-paying position.

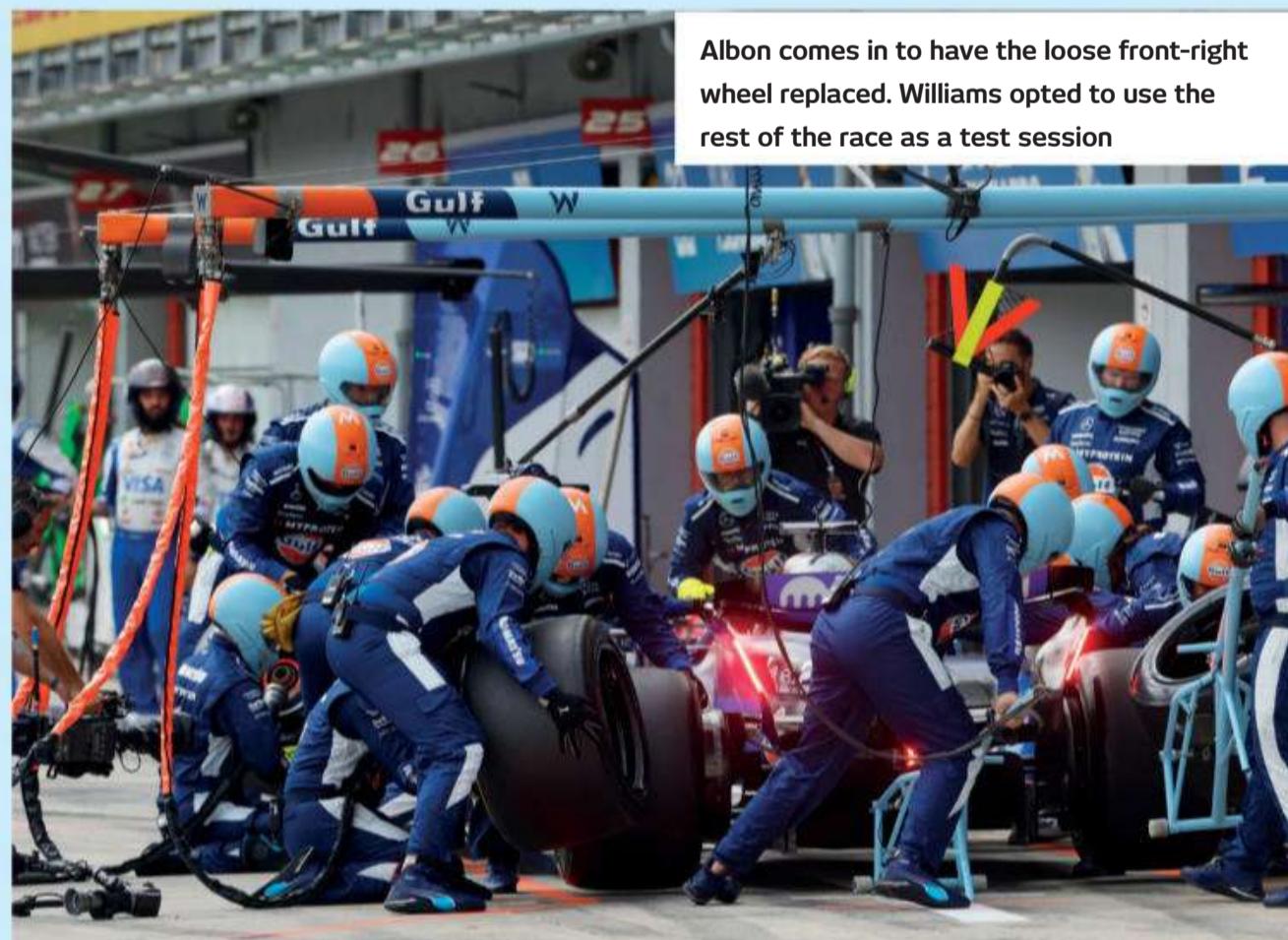
5 Re-signed Albon is the only retirement

Having just inked a new multi-year deal that will keep him at Williams into 2026, Alex Albon would have been buoyed coming into Imola. He also had the benefit of a new floor which was intended to reduce weight as well as improve aerodynamic performance – both necessary since team boss James Vowles claimed ahead of the weekend that the FW46 was losing half a second a lap through excess weight alone. Sadly Albon came away from

the Emilia-Romagna region as the race's one and only retirement.

Albon started on hard-compound Pirellis but then stopped earlier than would have been expected on such a strategy – lap nine. He was seen circulating slowly immediately afterwards, saying he heard a metallic scraping noise coming from his right-front wheel – subsequently discovered to have been fitted 10mm 'loose'. He was given a 10-second penalty for the car being released in an unsafe condition.

However, he escaped further sanction for driving the car in an unsafe condition and continued to lap the track. Williams used the race as a test session to experiment with brakes on long runs before it decided to retire the car 11 laps from the chequered flag.



Albon comes in to have the loose front-right wheel replaced. Williams opted to use the rest of the race as a test session

RESULTS ROUND 7

IMOLA / 19.05.24 / 63 LAPS



1st	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	1h25m25.252s
2nd	Lando Norris	McLaren	+0.725s
3rd	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	+7.916s
4th	Oscar Piastri	McLaren	+14.132s
5th	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	+22.325s
6th	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+35.104s
7th	George Russell	Mercedes	+47.154s
8th	Sergio Pérez	Red Bull	+54.776s
9th	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	+79.556s
10th	Yuki Tsunoda	RB	+1 lap
11th	Nico Hülkenberg	Haas	+1 lap
12th	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	+1 lap
13th	Daniel Ricciardo	RB	+1 lap
14th	Esteban Ocon	Alpine	+1 lap
15th	Zhou Guanyu	Stake	+1 lap
16th	Pierre Gasly	Alpine	+1 lap
17th	Logan Sargeant	Williams	+1 lap
18th	Valtteri Bottas	Stake	+1 lap
19th	Fernando Alonso	Aston Martin	+1 lap

Retirements

Alex Albon	Williams	51 laps/withdrawn
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Fastest lap

George Russell 1m18.586s on lap 54

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



CLIMATE **AIR TEMP** **TRACK TEMP**

Partially sunny	30°C	50°C
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DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1 Verstappen	136pts	11 Stroll	11pts
2 Leclerc	113pts	12 Bearman	6pts
3 Pérez	107pts	13 Hülkenberg	6pts
4 Norris	101pts	14 Ricciardo	5pts
5 Sainz	93pts	15 Ocon	1pt
6 Piastri	53pts	16 Magnussen	1pt
7 Russell	44pts	17 Albon	0pts
8 Hamilton	35pts	18 Guanyu	0pts
9 Alonso	33pts	19 Gasly	0pts
10 Tsunoda	15pts	20 Bottas	0pts
21 Sargeant			0pts

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FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 8

THE MONACO GP IN 5 KEY MOMENTS

REPORT BY JAMES ROBERTS

1 Processional drivers pictured

While the debate rages on as to whether Monte Carlo remains a suitable location to host a world championship Grand Prix, there's no denying it has a mythical quality. Monaco is a unique place, distinct from the Tilkedromes around the world. If you have a ken for rummaging through bargain bins, the editor of this magazine once wrote a book about it.

But, as students sitting an exam on chaos theory might well be asked, to what extent did the designer responsible for the Haas high-downforce wing help Charles Leclerc win this year's Monaco Grand Prix?

As the weekend on the Côte d'Azur unfolded, the two Haas drivers became central to the outcome. Procedural post-qualifying technical checks found the DRS flaps on both Haas cars opened more than the maximum permitted 85mm. Both Nico Hülkenberg and Kevin Magnussen were

running with a new rear wing; the non-conformity was the result of the trackside mechanics not being informed that the gap had to be set using measurements from a different area of the wing than before, owing to its different profile.

While the team admitted its error and claimed no performance advantage eventuated, the rules allow for no mitigations in this area and both



The early red flag meant the race was without pitstop jeopardy and became very predictable

cars therefore started from the back row. Off the line, Magnussen (competing with 10 points on his licence) found a way past his team-mate on the inside of Sainte Dévote and aimed for a gap inside Sergio Pérez (who had made a poor start from 16th on the grid) as they accelerated up Beau Rivage.

Pérez looked in his mirrors and the gap between the Red Bull and the Armco barrier quickly disappeared. Magnussen didn't back out and the resulting contact speared Pérez into the wall at high speed and wiped out Hülkenberg in the process. All the way up the hill, debris littered the road. It was a huge impact and, thankfully, given the narrow confines of Monaco and the speeds involved, it was extremely fortunate no marshals, photographers or spectators were injured.

"I don't know if Checo saw Kevin... Checo could have left space," said Hülkenberg. "At the same time, I think Kevin was also very optimistic about staying there, where the track gets narrower and there are little kinks up to Turn 3."

The race was instantly red-flagged to clear up the mess and replace the damaged Armco barriers,



Ferrari closed in on Red Bull in the constructors' race after a superb Monaco

PICTURES: ZAK MAUGER; SAM BLOXHAM; GLENN DUNBAR



It was an emotional victory for Leclerc, who had been on pole for his home race twice before. This time there were no mistakes

giving all remaining drivers a free change of tyres and making home hero Leclerc's job much easier from pole position. The top four drivers had started the race on Pirelli's medium tyres. With a change now permitted under the red flag, they bolted on the hards – which they knew, if managed at a reduced pace, could last a full 78-lap race distance. Running sometimes as much as eight or nine seconds off their fastest qualifying times, Leclerc, Oscar Piastri, Carlos Sainz and Lando Norris then went to the flag without pitting.

There was still a chance one of the leaders could have made a mistake or picked up a puncture. Leclerc had started on pole twice before on his home streets and fate has conspired to trip him up. This time around, thanks to the lap-one stoppage, luck was on his side as he guided his Ferrari home to an emotional victory ahead of Piastri.

Nevertheless the plodding pace of this tyre-management race, along with a lack of on-track overtaking, generated the usual complaints. Let's keep this in proportion, though: despite claims to the contrary, only the first lap after the restart was slower than the pace of the F2 race.

2 Leclerc follows in Chiron's wheeltracks

At just two square kilometres, Monaco is the second-smallest independent state in the world (after the Vatican City) and has a population of just under 40,000 people. Of that, around a third are Monégasque. From such a small pool, it's a remarkable feat for someone from the tiny nation to firstly become a Formula 1 driver, and secondly to triumph in their home race.

Of the three F1 drivers from Monaco, Olivier Beretta managed to finish eighth in the 1994 edition, while Louis Chiron did win on the streets of the city state in his Bugatti in 1931 (and was leading the '34 event until he went off at the hairpin two laps from the end). When Charles Leclerc emerged from the tunnel on the penultimate lap, he could barely see the road in front of him as the surge of emotions filled his eyes with tears. On the final tour, the yachts in the harbour blared their horns to drown out

the 16 remaining 1.6-litre V6s still circulating the 3.3km course.

After a 93-year wait for Monaco, Leclerc stood on the top step in front of the Grimaldi royal box as '*A Marcia de Muneghu*' (The March of Monaco) rang out across the Principality. Even the reigning monarch, Prince Albert, got carried away with it all, spraying champagne against protocol, to the bemusement of Michel Boeri, the elder statesman of the Automobile Club de Monaco.

"Yes, the Prince was very emotional," said Leclerc after the race. "When I was 12 or 13 years old, we went to the palace for the first time with my father to try and have some support with my career, which was just starting to be a bit more serious. Since then he has always supported me."

When asked about the pre-race nerves, or how much sleep he'd had the night before, Leclerc revealed that he arrived home too late to cook, so ordered his favourite pizza – margherita with prosciutto crudo and, just to be clear, never, ever, with pineapple.

"You never really know when will be the next opportunity to win, especially when it's your home



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 8



Ocon and Gasly during qualifying. They got even closer on the opening lap of the race...

race and even more so when your home race is Monaco," added Leclerc. "It is such a difficult track and a difficult weekend to master."

A lap mid-way through FP3 on Saturday morning signalled Leclerc's intentions. It was six tenths up on the opposition and team-mate Carlos Sainz admitted he didn't have the confidence that Leclerc had over the weekend. It was a remarkably long wait to move off five career wins (Austria 2022 was Leclerc's last triumph) and his dive into the harbour, along with team boss Frédéric Vasseur, was a satisfying end to a popular victory.

3 Tensions build in the Alpine camp

Just before the red flag was deployed on lap one, there was contact before the midfield runners arrived at the tunnel. Starting in 11th (one place behind his Alpine team-mate) Esteban Ocon was looking for an opportunity to get past Pierre Gasly as the pack streamed down the hill from Mirabeau.

Earlier in the month, in Miami, the duo ran side-by-side through several corners on the opening lap but did not make contact. Ahead of the start in Monaco they were warned that, given their close proximity on the grid – and their difference in tyre strategy, with Gasly on mediums and Ocon on hards – under no circumstances must they collide.

On the approach to the right-hander at Portier, Ocon rode the kerbs to take a lunge down the inside of his team-mate, into a gap that was always going to diminish to nothing unless Gasly drove straight into the barriers. The inevitable contact between the pair launched the rear of Ocon's Alpine high into the air.

When he came crashing down, the damage inflicted on his car (left-rear suspension and gearbox casing) was so severe he was unable to take the re-start. Alpine boss Bruno Famin was enraged with the first-lap tussle and from the pitwall vented his anger to TV station Canal+.

"This kind of incident is sad. Esteban's dive was completely out of place, it was exactly what we didn't want to see, and there will be the appropriate consequences." When asked what his response would be, he replied with "trancher dans le vif," which directly translates as to 'cut to the chase' with the implication that Ocon's short or long-term future could be in jeopardy. It has since been announced that Ocon will be leaving the team at the end of the season.

Ocon apologised and was handed a 10-second time penalty by the FIA, which was converted to a five-place grid penalty for the next race.

"We had clear instructions before the race on what to do, and whoever qualified ahead, the trailing car was supposed to help throughout the race," said Gasly. "That was the strategy. Unfortunately, that didn't happen."

4 Reprieve for Sainz

One of the luckiest drivers in Monaco was Carlos Sainz. Without the red-flag stoppage, Carlos was destined for retirement. Off the initial start, Sainz nearly managed to get ahead of Oscar Piastri rounding Sainte Dévote. Running in a special green and yellow Senna-tribute livery, the McLaren driver had enjoyed a strong qualifying session, pipping Sainz by 0.094s and his team-mate Lando Norris by just over a tenth.

As they ran around the exit of Turn 1, Piastri was up against the Armco and unable to yield more ground, while Sainz's left-front was cut by the serrated edge of the McLaren floor. The puncture was instant as his Ferrari bottomed out on the bumps all the way up to Massenet. Outside the Hotel de Paris, Sainz parked up, his race seemingly over – although he did manage to return to the pits unaided once the field had gone past.

The leaders had exited the Nouvelle Chicane when the red flag came out but, crucially, Zhou Guanyu hadn't made it to the first-sector timing line. That's because he'd backed off as the Haas/Pérez shunt unfolded ahead of him and very carefully picked his way through the debris, while also letting the medical car past.

It meant the only point the FIA could use as an



Sainz tries to resist Piastri at the first start. The resultant puncture didn't prove costly

accurate measurement of the position of every car to determine the grid order for the restart was at the second Safety Car line, positioned on the exit of Sainte Dévote. Because of Zhou's slow passage, it meant Sainz was given a reprieve – and was back in third place for the restart.

5 Mind the (points) gap

Remarkably, after Monaco there were just 24 points separating Red Bull from second-placed Ferrari in the constructors' race. After such a dominant streak, the Milton Keynes squad has reached a point where questions are being asked – and not just behind closed doors. Jos Verstappen used his usual outlet, *De Telegraaf*, to declare the end of Red Bull's dominance and claim "Max has

been good at hiding some of the [car] problems".

So was Monaco an outlier or does it point to a shift in the competitive order? The answer is probably a bit of both.

While the suspension on the Red Bull doesn't cope as well on the kerbs and bumps at a place like Monaco, Max would have qualified higher than sixth if he hadn't had a mistake at Turn 1, on his final Q3 qualifying run. Stuck between both Mercedes in the race, he did make a stop for fresh rubber in the latter stages – immediately running two seconds a lap quicker – but was unable to find a way past George Russell, who nursed his medium tyres for the entirety of the race.

Progress is being made by the opposition and Red Bull design chief Adrian Newey did concede at the beginning of the year that performance gains would start to flatten. With Ferrari and McLaren closing the gap, is it too much to hope for a close fight in the drivers' championship too?

Max after a difficult qualifying.

He made an error at Turn 1 in a car struggling over the kerbs



RESULTS ROUND 8

MONACO / 26.05.24 / 78 LAPS



1st	Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	2h23m15.554s
2nd	Oscar Piastri	McLaren	+7.152s
3rd	Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	+7.585s
4th	Lando Norris	McLaren	+8.650s
5th	George Russell	Mercedes	+13.309s
6th	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	+13.853s
7th	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+14.908s
8th	Yuki Tsunoda	RB	+1 lap
9th	Alex Albon	Williams	+1 lap
10th	Pierre Gasly	Alpine	+1 lap
11th	Fernando Alonso	Aston Martin	+2 laps
12th	Daniel Ricciardo	RB	+2 laps
13th	Valtteri Bottas	Stake	+2 laps
14th	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	+2 laps
15th	Logan Sargeant	Williams	+2 laps
16th	Zhou Guanyu	Stake	+2 laps

Retirements

Esteban Ocon	Alpine	0 laps/accident
Sergio Pérez	Red Bull	0 laps/accident
Nico Hülkenberg	Haas	0 laps/accident
Kevin Magnussen	Haas	0 laps/accident

Fastest lap

Lewis Hamilton 1m14.165s on lap 63

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED



CLIMATE	AIR TEMP	TRACK TEMP
Sunny	27°C	46°C

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1	Verstappen	169pts	11	Stroll	11pts
2	Leclerc	138pts	12	Bearman	6pts
3	Norris	113pts	13	Hülkenberg	6pts
4	Sainz	108pts	14	Ricciardo	5pts
5	Pérez	107pts	15	Albon	2pts
6	Piastri	71pts	16	Ocon	1pt
7	Russell	54pts	17	Magnussen	1pt
8	Hamilton	42pts	18	Gasly	1pt
9	Alonso	33pts	19	Guanyu	0pts
10	Tsunoda	19pts	20	Bottas	0pts
21	Sargeant	0pts			

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FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 9

THE CANADIAN GP
IN 5 KEY MOMENTS

REPORT BY JAMES ROBERTS



1 Was McLaren undone by Lando's first or second stop?

Max Verstappen has now won 50 of the 75 races held since the beginning of 2021, giving him a win ratio of 66 per cent. His triumph in the Canadian Grand Prix was considered by some as payback for Miami, in which the inopportune deployment of the Safety Car cost him victory. In Montréal, race leader Lando Norris fell foul of a Safety Car intervention. But was it that or a subsequent pitwall decision to delay moving to slicks which cost Norris victory?

Canada was a race in which the strategists on the pitwall needed brains as sharp as the supernumerate contestants facing the numbers game on *Countdown*. The Montréal weekend was constantly interrupted by storm cells which bubbled up over the St Lawrence seaway, delivering short, sharp showers before blue skies emerged from behind the angry, black clouds.

The fickle Québécois climate led to the race starting wet, then drying, before another cloudburst. Within this cycle the relative pace of the frontrunners kept changing, which resulted in an unpredictable, edge-of-your-seat spectacle.

The delay in taking his final stop (above)
relegated Norris to second when a win was on



Despite the familiar winner, the result was far from a foregone conclusion.

In the first stint, third-placed Norris dropped to nine seconds behind polesitter and initial race leader George Russell and Verstappen as he delicately managed his first set of intermediate tyres. As the track began to dry his tyres were in better shape, and his McLaren came alive. On lap 14 Lando circulated the Circuit Gilles Villeneuve two seconds faster than the frontrunners. As soon as it was dry enough for DRS to be activated, he passed Verstappen (crucially before Max picked up DRS from Russell) and then the race leader.

By lap 24 Norris had scampered off into the distance with a 5.8-second advantage. Then the

Safety Car was scrambled after Logan Sargeant spun his Williams into the Turn 4 wall.

The challenge for the strategists was the fact the radar showed another rain cell of unknown intensity was about to hit the Île Notre-Dame. Norris was approaching the pit entrance when the SC boards emerged. In the absence of an instruction to pit, he stayed out – and caught the Safety Car at Turn 5. When he pitted at the end of the lap he emerged back behind Verstappen and Russell, who had dived for the pits straight away.

"We should have won the race and we didn't," rued Norris later. "It's so frustrating. We had the pace. We didn't do a good enough job as a team to box when we should have done and not get stuck behind the Safety Car."

"We didn't want to pit unnecessarily for a new set of inters when this set of inters could have been good enough in case of very light rain," explained team principal Andrea Stella after the race. "I think it was much easier for the car behind to kind of do the opposite."

"In hindsight, we could have told the driver, 'In case of Safety Car pit,' so he would have just reacted instinctively to just pit."

After the second shower hit, the track started to dry once more but it was still treacherous off-line



In an improved Mercedes W15 Russell claimed pole on Saturday (above) and led the race on Sunday for 20 laps (below)



and especially wet around Turns 1 and 2 – crucially, where the pitlane feeds out.

Verstappen and Russell both pitted for slicks on lap 46, but Norris stayed out. At the time he was setting the fastest laps of the race and the plan was to 'over cut' the leaders. For two more laps Lando remained on the course and on lap 48, when he pitted, he held a 20.5s lead over Verstappen.

The Turn 2 crowd roared as Norris appeared set to emerge ahead, but the wetness of the surface militated against him getting the power down and the Red Bull swept into a lead it held until the chequered flag. Had Lando pitted a lap too late? Red Bull team boss Christian Horner thought so.

"They [McLaren] left him for two and that was crucial as that gave Max another lap to generate the temperature," he said. "When Lando did pit, he [Verstappen] had tyres that were in a window and was able to drive and pull out a three-second gap by sector one. So that timing was crucial."

"I probably pushed too late on that inter tyre in the middle stint," Norris said. "It's why we stayed out, because I was so quick at the end of that stint, but I probably just didn't push early enough."

2 Strong weekend for Mercedes and Russell – but win goes begging

In a race of ever-changing conditions, it's just as easy to make a mistake behind the wheel as it is to blunder on the pitwall. All of the top three – Verstappen, Norris and Russell – had wayward moments where they slid across the grass. But it was the Mercedes driver who made more mistakes over the course of the 70-lap encounter. Victory might have been possible – certainly P2 was on the cards.

For the first time since Jerez 1997, the top two on the grid set an identical time in qualifying. To the thousandth of a second. Russell was the first to set his neat 1m12.000s lap, so claimed the second pole of his career ahead of Verstappen.

He led away until the drying track allowed Norris to pass on lap 21. While defending his lead against the McLaren at the final chicane, Russell cut the corner and inadvertently conceded another place to Verstappen. He never headed the Red Bull again.

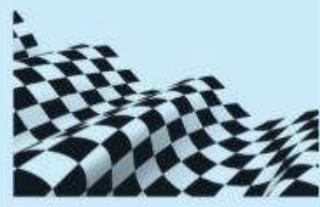
When Norris made his stop for slicks, Russell took advantage of his hotter tyres and passed the McLaren, then set off in pursuit of the leading Red Bull. But Russell tried too hard and, at the Turn 8/9 chicane where he crashed last year, he made a small mistake and Norris got back past.

This prompted a rare team radio interjection from Mercedes boss Toto Wolff who urged George to "focus".

A second, late-race Safety Car enabled Russell to fit fresh rubber, but he fell behind the other McLaren of Oscar Piastri. Seven laps from the end Russell attempted to pass Piastri on the outside at the last chicane, but Piastri was brilliantly obdurate in his defending and, to use a choice Martin Brundle-ism, hugged the apex like it was his favourite granny.

Russell came off worse and dropped behind Hamilton (although he did impressively re-pass his team-mate on the penultimate lap).

"I think that mistake with Oscar when I tried overtaking him and I lost the position to Lewis cost us at least P2," conceded Russell, who clinched Mercedes' first podium of the season. ▶



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE DEBRIEF

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 9

At what is traditionally one of his best tracks, Hamilton finished fourth – his highest finish of the season – but described this as “one of the worst races I have driven”. He spent much of the opening stint battling with Fernando Alonso’s Aston Martin and lost ground to the leading group.

“The car is progressing, moving forwards, but ultimately [it was] a pretty poor weekend for me,” Lewis added.

“I think this weekend, the car was capable of winning. That’s why it’s not such a great feeling. But we will take the points and keep trying.”

3 New deals, old problems for Pérez and Tsunoda

Often a driver lacking in confidence can be buoyed by the public affirmation their seat is safe for another year. In the lead-up to Canada, Red Bull confirmed Sergio Pérez would continue at the Milton Keynes outfit, but the news didn’t help his current lacklustre form.

For the second consecutive grand prix Pérez failed to progress from Q1 and he never got close to troubling the top 15 during the race itself.

On the first lap he made contact with Pierre Gasly’s Alpine and then on lap 53 his miserable weekend was made worse when he spun backwards into the Turn 6 wall. The shunt severely deranged his rear wing. Normally this would be an instant retirement but this track is relatively unusual in that it doesn’t have a complete perimeter road – so beached vehicles usually need to be collected by a truck, covered by a Safety Car. Thus, instead of parking up, Pérez was advised by the Red Bull pitwall – anxious to avoid a course neutralisation which could compromise the leading sister car – to return to the pits. However, in doing so, he dropped several broken pieces of carbon fibre onto the track. The stewards took a dim view and awarded Pérez a three-place grid penalty for Spain and handed the team a €25,000 fine.

“It was a horrible weekend for Checo,” said Red Bull team boss Christian Horner. “Thankfully, Ferrari had a shocker and didn’t get any points so that let us off the hook somewhat, but we need both cars scoring. He’ll be determined to come back and show everybody the form we know he’s capable of.”

During the Canadian Grand Prix weekend Yuki Tsunoda’s future at RB was confirmed for another year – but his run of good form (see p58) came



Canada was a total disaster for Pérez. Out in Q1, a shunt when running 13th (below), and a three-place grid penalty for the Spanish GP



undone. After running most of the race in the top ten, he lost control of his car at the Turn 8/9 chicane just three laps from the finish. Team-mate Daniel Ricciardo – whose future is less secure, and who had been given a slating by paddock rent-a-quote Jacques Villeneuve over the weekend – finished a creditable eighth.

4 Ferrari hopes pointless weekend is a one-off

The combination of a resurfaced track and a weekend of rain that washed away any rubber harmed Ferrari more than others, setting the tone for an uncharacteristically off-form weekend. In particular the Maranello cars were struggling to fire up their front tyres and, in low-grip conditions on Saturday, neither Monaco Grand Prix winner Charles Leclerc nor team-mate Carlos Sainz progressed into Q3.

Ferrari didn’t fare any better during the race. In the early running Leclerc was afflicted by a power unit issue costing him 80bhp – and curtailing his pace by around a second a lap. The tone of his radio communications reflected his frustration, a state of affairs which came as no surprise to team boss Frédéric Vasseur.

“When you’re in the car, fighting in a group and

you have no chance to overtake, your engineer is telling you you’re missing 80 horsepower, I can perfectly understand that motivation is difficult to find in this kind of situation.

“If he was not frustrated in these conditions, I would be worried.”

The hoped-for red flag which would have afforded an opportunity to reset the power unit never appeared. Under the first Safety Car Ferrari performed the necessary ‘power cycle’, resulting in a very slow stop so the team gambled on sending Charles out on hard slicks in the hope the track might dry out. It was a disaster and Leclerc was lapped before retiring.

Sainz also struggled in the race after losing part of his front wing against Valtteri Bottas’s Stake early on. He was the cause of the second Safety Car, hitting the wet kerb at Turn 6 and rotating into the path of Alex Albon. A double retirement therefore for Williams and Ferrari. For the Prancing Horse, it was the team’s first pointless weekend since Australia 2023. Quite a contrast from the



Vasseur had reason to be glum after both Ferraris missed Q3 and retired from the race

highs of Monaco just a fortnight earlier.

"Everything went wrong and I hope we've put all the shitty parts of the season on the same weekend," concluded Vasseur.

5 Ocon still refusing to play nicely

While two racers had their drives confirmed in the week of the Canadian GP, another had his future made public – that he would be losing his position. While Alpine insisted the blue-on-blue incident at Monaco had no bearing on its decision not to renew Esteban Ocon's contract at the end of the season, the timing of the announcement naturally led many pundits to conclude the opposite.

With a three-place grid penalty in Montréal, Ocon started the weekend on the back foot

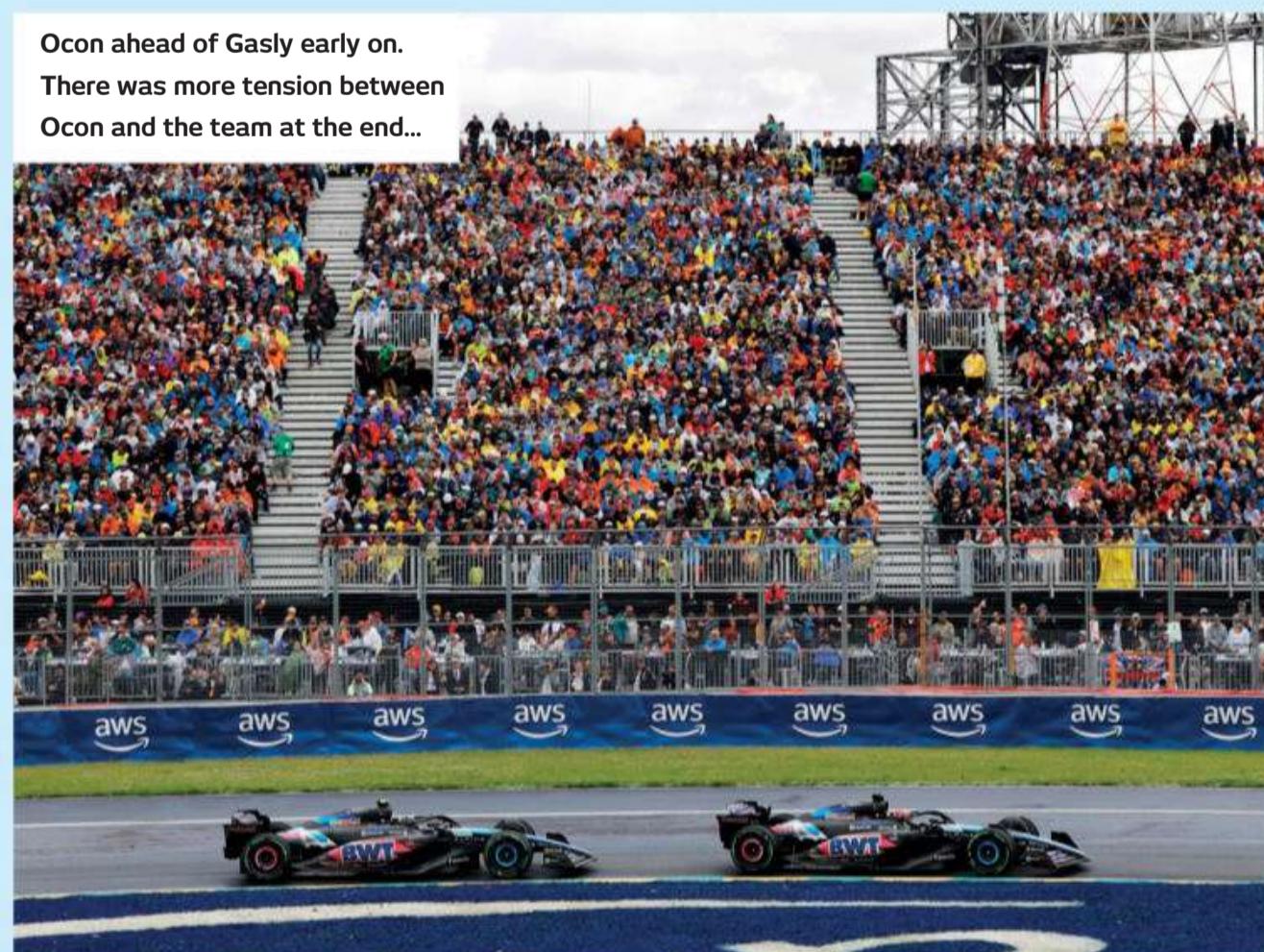
and even had to give up FP1 to Alpine's reserve driver Jack Doohan – although rain compromised the junior's running.

When the second Safety Car appeared Ocon was running ninth but compromised by an energy management problem. Two laps from the end, Ocon was instructed to let team-mate Pierre Gasly past in a bid to hunt down Daniel Ricciardo ahead. His initial reaction was "Forget it." He finally conceded halfway into lap 69, by which time it was too late for Gasly to attack the RB. The team decided not to switch the positions back and tenth-placed Ocon was not best pleased.

"The call made no sense," said Esteban. "I've done my part of the job, but not the team today. It's very sad. I've always been a team player, I've always respected the instructions I've been given."

Ninth and 10th was Alpine's first double points score of the year, but the parting of the ways isn't going smoothly.

Ocon ahead of Gasly early on.
There was more tension between Ocon and the team at the end...



RESULTS ROUND 9

CIRCUIT GILLES VILLENEUVE /
09.06.24 / 70 LAPS



1st	Max Verstappen	Red Bull	1h45m47.927s
2nd	Lando Norris	McLaren	+3.879s
3rd	George Russell	Mercedes	+4.317s
4th	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes	+4.915s
5th	Oscar Piastri	McLaren	+10.199s
6th	Fernando Alonso	Aston Martin	+17.510s
7th	Lance Stroll	Aston Martin	+23.625s
8th	Daniel Ricciardo	RB	+28.672s
9th	Pierre Gasly	Alpine	+30.021s
10th	Esteban Ocon	Alpine	+30.313s
11th	Nico Hülkenberg	Haas	+30.824s
12th	Kevin Magnussen	Haas	+31.253s
13th	Valtteri Bottas	Stake	+40.487s
14th	Yuki Tsunoda	RB	+52.694s
15th	Zhou Guanyu	Stake	+1 lap

Retirements

Carlos Sainz	Ferrari	52 laps/accident
Alex Albon	Williams	52 laps/accident
Sergio Pérez	Red Bull	51 laps/accident
Charles Leclerc	Ferrari	40 laps/damage
Logan Sargeant	Williams	23 laps/accident

Fastest lap

Lewis Hamilton 1m14.856s on lap 70

TYRE COMPOUNDS USED

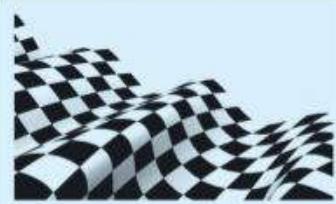


CLIMATE	AIR TEMP	TRACK TEMP
Wet/dry	16°C	21°C

DRIVERS' STANDINGS

1 Verstappen	194pts	11 Stroll	17pts
2 Leclerc	138pts	12 Ricciardo	9pts
3 Norris	131pts	13 Bearman	6pts
4 Sainz	108pts	14 Hülkenberg	6pts
5 Pérez	107pts	15 Gasly	3pts
6 Piastri	81pts	16 Albon	2pts
7 Russell	69pts	17 Ocon	2pt
8 Hamilton	55pts	18 Magnussen	1pt
9 Alonso	41pts	19 Guanyu	0pts
10 Tsunoda	19pts	20 Bottas	0pts
21 Sargeant			0pts

motorsport
STATS



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE PREVIEW

SPANISH GP

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 10

21-23 June 2024
Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya

PICTURES: STEVEN TEE; ZAK MAUGER; ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDIDGE



THE MAIN EVENT

Once Formula 1's testing venue of choice, Barcelona has slid out of fashion in recent years. Its very ubiquity in winter and (occasional) mid-season testing – owing to the varied nature of all the corners, which give the cars a broad-spectrum workout – made for processionals races. Now the budget cap has pushed testing over to the Middle Eastern leg – and the final insult has come in the form of F1 tying up a 10-year deal with Madrid to host the Spanish Grand Prix from 2026 onwards.

That may not be it for the Catalans, though, since the promoter still holds out hope for F1 to continue here under another title, as when Jerez hosted a European GP in 1997 (in that case, though, it was a one-off to plug a hole in the calendar caused by the venue for the planned Portuguese GP going bust).

2023 RACE RECAP

Max Verstappen broke a lap record which had stood for 18 years when he set pole position – aided by the removal of the loathed chicane before the final corner. That tweak to the layout also made for one of the most strategically divided Spanish GPs in years since it put so much stress on the left-front tyre.

Not that this stopped Max leading from start to finish but it made for some entertaining battles through the rest of the field as team-mate Sergio Pérez fought through from 11th on the grid. Try as he might, though, Checo couldn't prevent the Mercedes duo of Lewis Hamilton and George Russell taking the final podium spots.

KEY CORNER: TURN 10

Remodelled in recent years, this isn't the big stop it once was. The temptation is to carry too much speed in, which can incur track-limits penalties on the way out...



THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE

2023
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull2022
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull2021
Lewis
Hamilton
Mercedes2020
Lewis
Hamilton
Mercedes2019
Lewis
Hamilton
Mercedes

RACE DATA

Circuit name Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya
First grand prix 1991
Number of laps 66
Circuit length 2.905 miles
Race distance 190.645 miles
Lap record 1m16.330s, Max Verstappen (2023)
F1 races held 33
Winners from pole 24
Pirelli compounds C1, C2, C3

CAR PERFORMANCE

Downforce level High
Cooling requirement Medium
Full throttle 64.4%
Top speed 200mph
Average speed 119mph

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 21 June
Practice 1 12:30-13:30
Practice 2 16:00-17:00
Saturday 22 June
Practice 3 11:30-12:30
Qualifying 15:00-16:00
Sunday 23 June
Race 14:00
Live coverage Sky Sports F1
Highlights Channel 4



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE PREVIEW

AUSTRIAN GP

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 11

28-30 June 2024
Red Bull Ring

THE MAIN EVENT

For the third time, the Red Bull Ring will host a sprint race in addition to the main grand prix on Sunday. And each time it'll have been under a slightly different regime since the sprint rules have changed four times in as many years since the format was introduced. While the drivers are moaning about the effects of the latest intervention – plus ça change – on the flow of the race weekend, there's no doubt the sprint is an effective gimmick on this short, frenetic circuit.

In its first incarnation the track, then known as the Osterreichring, was longer, faster and rather more dangerous. The greedy local landowners who forced it to shrink in redevelopment ended up doing current owners Red Bull a favour, since races here now are generally full of incident – generally with harmless results.

2023 RACE RECAP

Austria always attracts a huge contingent of Dutch fans and the Orange Army was duly delighted to watch Max Verstappen win both the sprint and the main event from pole position, leading home team-mate Sergio Pérez in the shorter race and heading home Ferrari's Charles Leclerc by five seconds on Sunday.

Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of this weekend, though, was the impact of the first phase of McLaren's car upgrades. Lando Norris received the first tranche here and came home fourth in the grand prix – a remarkable turnaround for a team which had been wedged to the back of the grid in the opening rounds.

KEY CORNER: TURN 9

Named after local hero Jochen Rindt, this right-hand corner is a blind entry over a slight crest – much trickier than it looks on a track diagram!



THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE

2023
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull2022
Charles
Leclerc
Ferrari2021
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull2021
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull2020
Lewis
Hamilton
Mercedes

RACE DATA

Circuit Red Bull Ring
First GP 1970
Number of laps 71
Circuit length 2.683 miles
Race distance 190.420 miles
Lap record 1m05.619s
 Carlos Sainz (2020)
F1 races held 38
Winners from pole 14
Pirelli compounds C3, C4, C5

CAR PERFORMANCE

Downforce level Low
Cooling requirement Medium
Full throttle 66%
Top speed 192mph
Average speed 140mph

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 28 June
Practice 1 11:30-12:30
Sprint qualifying 15:30-16:14
Saturday 29 June
Sprint 11:00-12:00
Qualifying 15:00-16:00
Sunday 30 June
Race 14:00
Live coverage Sky Sports F1
Highlights Channel 4



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE PREVIEW

BRITISH GP

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 12

5-7 July 2024

Silverstone

PICTURES: STEVE EETHERINGTON; GLENN DUNBAR; ILLUSTRATION: ALAN ELDIDGE



THE MAIN EVENT

It's been a remarkable journey for the former RAF Silverstone, from moribund airfield to the home of the British Grand Prix – a status it's often laboured to retain over the years, thanks to an often fractious relationship with former Formula 1 commercial rights holder Bernie Ecclestone. 'The Bolt' famously compared this venue to a dysfunctional country fête; his successors thankfully take a rather more enlightened view and the British GP now has a secure place on the calendar and is held up as an exemplar for others to follow.

Music acts and other off-track entertainment add to the outdoor music festival vibe but the nature of the track – fast, flowing, spectacular – delivers what the fans are looking for. Tickets are naturally hard to come by even though home favourite Lewis Hamilton isn't likely to add to his tally of eight wins...

2023 RACE RECAP

Max Verstappen took his customary place on pole position but patriotic home fans could draw some succour from the presence of the two McLarens in second and third. Once the crowd had removed their earplugs after actor Damien Lewis finished butchering the national anthem, Lando Norris brought them to their feet by seizing the lead on the opening lap.

Unfortunately for the Silverstone faithful, Verstappen soon got by once DRS was enabled and led the rest of the race but Norris managed his tyres well to hang on to second as Hamilton completed the podium.

KEY CORNER: TURN 15

Better known as Stowe, this fast right-hander at the end of the Hangar Straight is challenging to judge because of a slight kink at the exit.



THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE



2023
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull



2022
Carlos
Sainz
Ferrari



2021
Lewis
Hamilton
Mercedes



2020
Max
Verstappen
Red Bull



2020
Lewis
Hamilton
Mercedes



RACE DATA

Circuit Silverstone

Grand Prix Circuit

First GP 1950

Number of laps 52

Circuit length 3.66 miles

Race distance 190.262 miles

Lap record 1m27.097s

Max Verstappen (2020)

F1 races held 58

Winners from pole 22

Pirelli compounds C1, C2, C3

CAR PERFORMANCE

Downforce level High

Cooling requirement Medium

Full throttle 66%

Top speed 199mph

Average speed 153mph

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 5 July

Practice 1 12:30-13:30

Practice 2 16:00-17:00

Saturday 5 July

Practice 3 11:30-12:30

Qualifying 15:00-16:00

Sunday 7 July

Race 15:00

Live coverage Sky Sports F1 and Channel 4



FINISHING STRAIGHT

RACE PREVIEW

HUNGARIAN GP

F1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 13

19-21 July 2024

Hungaroring



THE MAIN EVENT

The Hungaroring's proximity to Budapest, a culturally fascinating European capital city with an intriguing history and buzzing nightlife, makes the Hungarian Grand Prix a great event around which to plan a mini-break. It's got excellent travel connections too (if direct flights are booked out or on the expensive side, it's easy to fly to Vienna and drive).

This was the first grand prix to take place behind the iron curtain when that was a thing. While the world has changed a lot since then, the track has evolved but gradually, with a few tweaks here and there. Curiously, car and tyre performance in the recent era – combined with unpredictable weather at this time of year – makes for more exciting racing than in the old days when this was a processional venue.

2023 RACE RECAP

In a surprising turn of events Lewis Hamilton claimed pole for Mercedes. But Max Verstappen made short work of him at the start to snatch the lead and claim Red Bull's 12th consecutive race win, a new record in F1. Carambolage ensued at Turn 1 when Zhou Guanyu, flustered as an electronics glitch spoiled his start from a career-best fifth on the grid, missed his braking point and rear-ended the returning Daniel Ricciardo.

Lando Norris emphasised McLaren's comeback by finishing second – but provoked a diplomatic incident when his signature 'bottle slam' on the podium caused the hand-made ceramic winner's trophy to topple over and break.

KEY CORNER: TURN 1

Coming at the end of a DRS-augmented straight, this hairpin corner offers a variety of possible lines – and the possibility of overcooking it on the brakes.



THE PAST FIVE WINNERS HERE



2023

Max
Verstappen
Red Bull



2022

Max
Verstappen
Red Bull



2021

Esteban
Ocon
Alpine



2020

Lewis
Hamilton
Mercedes



2019

Lewis
Hamilton
Mercedes

RACE DATA

Circuit Hungaroring

First GP 1986

Number of laps 70

Circuit length 2.722 miles

Race distance 190.53 miles

Lap record 1m16.627s

Lewis Hamilton (2020)

F1 races held 38

Winners from pole 16

Pirelli compounds TBA

CAR PERFORMANCE

Downforce level High

Cooling requirement High

Full throttle 55%

Top speed 193mph

Average speed 123mph

TIMETABLE (UK TIME)

Friday 19 July

Practice 1 12:30-13:30

Practice 2 16:00-17:00

Saturday 20 July

Practice 3 11:30-12:30

Qualifying 15:00-16:00

Sunday 21 July

Race 14:00

Live coverage Sky Sports F1

Highlights Channel 4



FINISHING STRAIGHT

GEAR UP

F1 UPGRADES

Enhance the F1 experience with the latest must-have products

AVI-8 x AIRFIX COLLECTION

Price from £210

avi-8.co.uk

If your childhood memories are heady with the scent of polystyrene cement amid the painstakingly precise assembly of finely detailed model aircraft, this latest collection from aviation-inspired watch brand AVI-8 is for you. The five-piece collection features a variety of movements including Japanese Meca-Quartz Chronograph, Dual Time Feature and Automatic with Three Hands Date.

Each one incorporates the Airfix logo with signature AVI-8 styling flourishes such as a multi-layered dial, luminous hands, a fixed stainless steel bezel and a genuine leather strap.

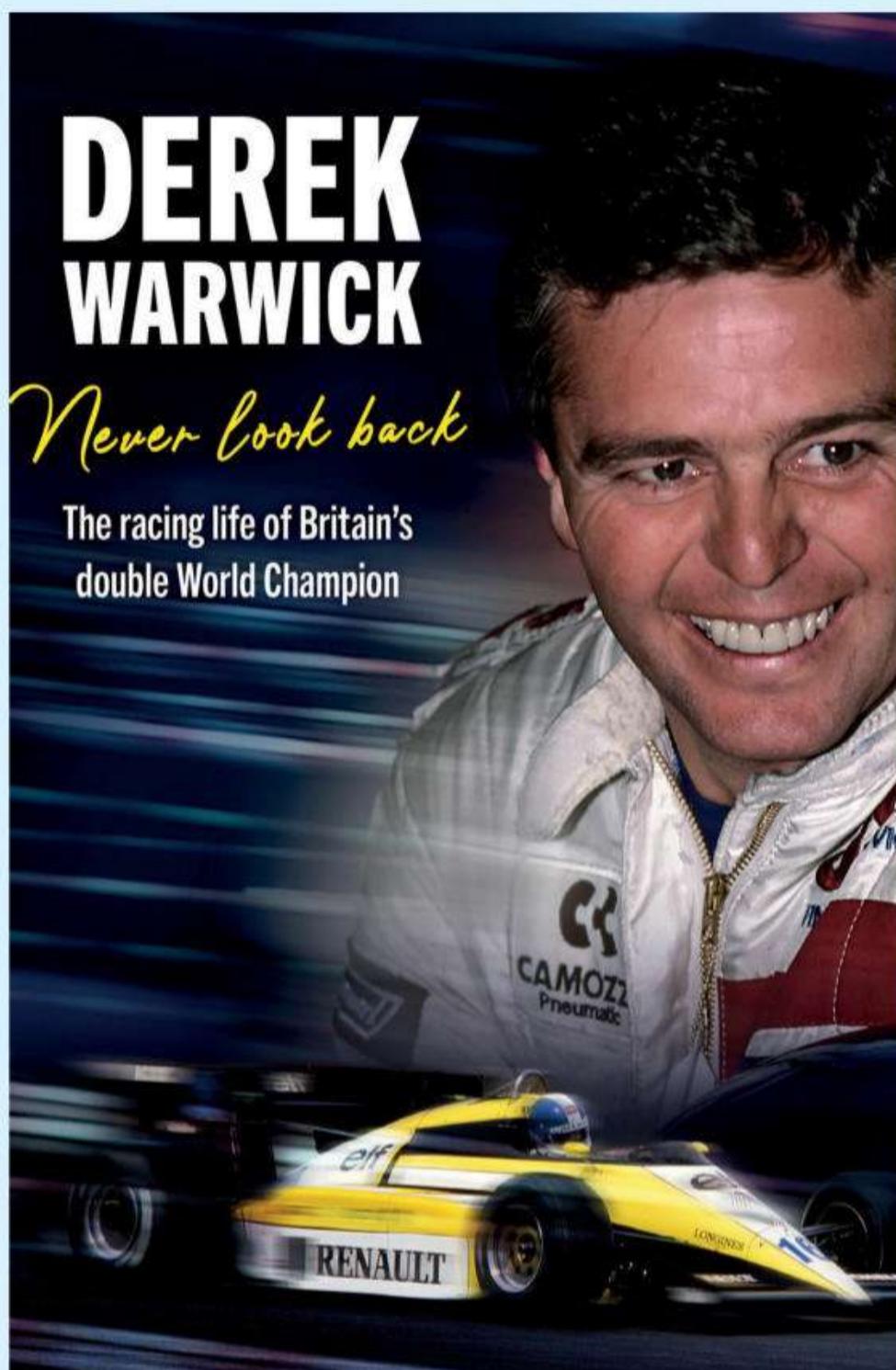
The watches also arrive delightfully packaged in boxes reminiscent of those in which you would find Airfix model kits. Fortunately no painting or modern health and safety precautions are required.



DEREK WARWICK

Never look back

The racing life of Britain's double World Champion



DEREK WARWICK – NEVER LOOK BACK

Author Derek Warwick, David Tremayne

Price £60

evropublishing.com

In the early 1980s you'd have bet on Derek Warwick being Britain's next Formula 1 world champion rather than Nigel Mansell, then a somewhat derided figure toiling for a Lotus team clearly in decline. But, encouraged by the speed if not the reliability of his 1984 Renault, Derek turned down an offer to go to Williams the following season. Sadly the '85 Renault was a disaster while the recently minted Williams-Honda partnership went from strength to strength – and Renault responded by quitting F1.

While this wasn't the end of a

racing career which had begun in stock cars on short-track ovals such as Aldershot Stadium, it altered Derek's trajectory away from the pinnacle of F1 – but there was still a Le Mans 24 Hours victory and a world sportscar championship to come. Written in collaboration with another F1 legend, GP Racing contributor David Tremayne, this is a fascinating memoir in which Derek's charm and good humour infuses every page – even when describing career troughs such as being vetoed as Ayrton Senna's team-mate.



F1 24

Price from £59.99

ea.com

Formula 1 itself hasn't changed massively from 2023 to 2024 – same tech formula, still one chap doing most of the winning unless adverse circumstances intervene. So you might well be inclined to ask what the latest iteration of the official gaming franchise has to offer beyond new 'skins' for the cars themselves.

The answer is a major update to the format and philosophy of the game's career mode. Where previously players could create custom drivers to usher through the

hurly-burly of a career, the new 'Driver Career' mode enables them to step into the shoes of one of the current superstars and take them through a multi-year career arc, trying to improve their ratings and star power. It is very much in keeping with the *Drive To Survive* era in which the 20 drivers have also become celebrities.

On top of this, there have been many 'under the hood' refinements to the game's driving dynamics and there are a host of new car setup and engine-mode options.

FORMULA 1 CAR BY CAR 2000-09

Author Peter Higham

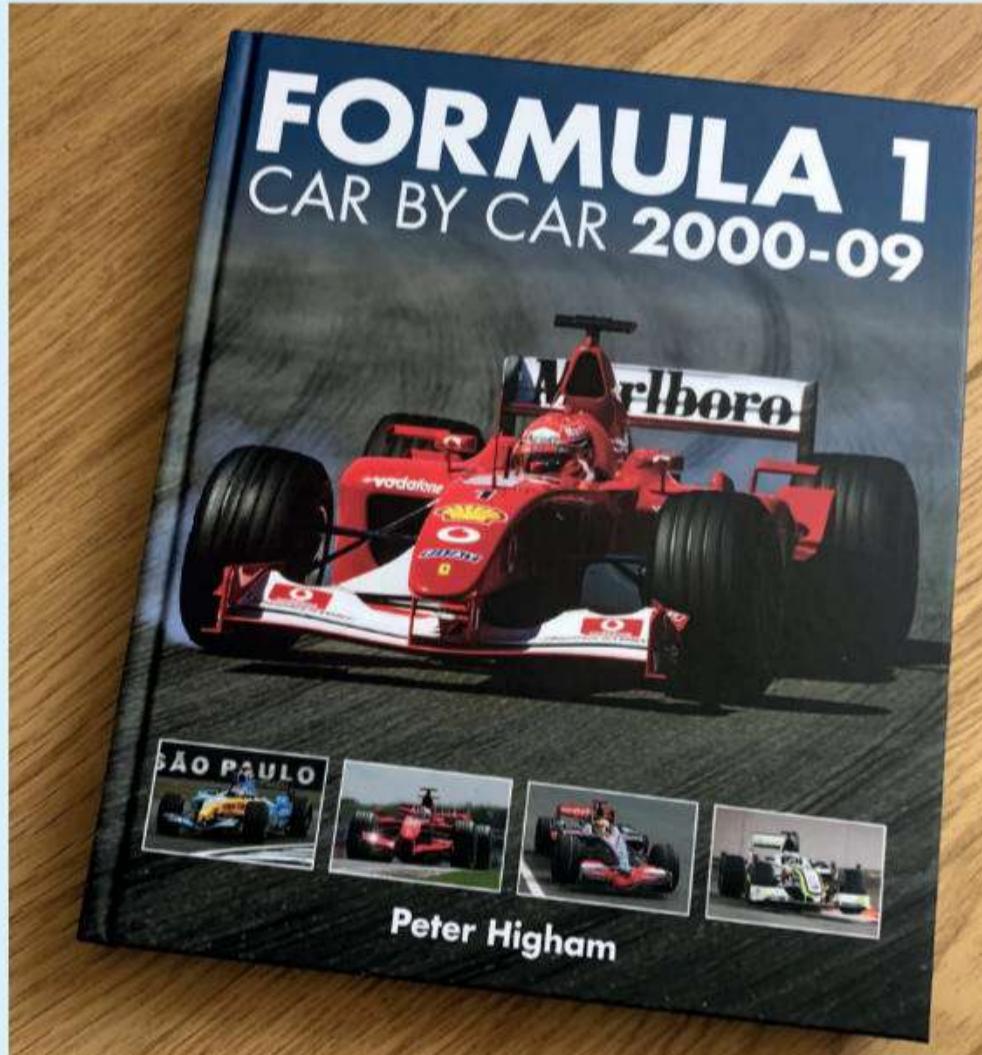
Price £60

evropublishing.com

Remember when the 'new' millennium was the only show in town? And then the excitement and optimism abated as it slowly dawned on the world's population that really everything was business as usual. This was certainly so in Formula 1 as Ferrari dominated for five consecutive years.

Disruption was in the offing, though, and this latest instalment in Peter Higham's meticulously

researched decade-by-decade series conveys the reader through the pinnacle of the V10 era to cost-controlled V8s and the most wide-reaching change in the technical formula in F1's history to that point. The scholarship and production values are immaculate, and there is joy in exploring some of the less well-remembered facets of the decade as well as the headline business.





FINISHING STRAIGHT

THE FINAL LAP

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FLAT CHAT

FULL THROTTLE
MUSINGS WITH
ALEX KALINAUKAS

PICTURES



WHY IT'S WRONG TO WRITE-OFF ESTEBAN OCON

It was one of those endless moments that precedes catastrophe.

Esteban Ocon's Alpine A524 sent skywards, its left-rear having thumped the right-front of team-mate Pierre Gasly. In the gaudy opulence of Monaco's Larvotto district, the resulting crash to earth was to be just as jarringly costly.

Ocon had been under strict instructions not only to not attack the lead Alpine car, but help it – Gasly started 10th and was essentially nailed on for his first point of 2024 given Monaco's overtaking void. The botched pass put Ocon out of the race, his rear suspension destroyed, and incensed Alpine team principal Bruno Famin.

The now one-year team boss has an oft-incomprehensible approach to communication with the media. But he vowed drastic action. Eight days later, Ocon's upcoming exit from the team he'd joined in 2020 as Renault, the squad for



Ocon is leaving Alpine at the end of the season, but it would be a shame to see him exit F1

which he'd scored that famous victory in Hungary in 2021, was announced.

The split had seemingly been a while in the making. The A524 is a colourless disaster. Ocon's over-celebrating getting it out of Q1 in Australia and Japan hadn't gone down well within Alpine. Then there was that aggressive early racing with Gasly in Miami, where points were on for a team where this is rarely guaranteed in 2024. It evoked

memories of his clashes with team-mate Fernando Alonso, which reached an ugly blue-on-blue head at Interlagos in 2022, before Ocon's illustrious rival abandoned Alpine to join Aston.

At the time of writing, Ocon still has F1 options for 2025 and beyond. Haas is his most likely destination, but he could be an option for Audi/Sauber. That's assuming his latest internecine contact hasn't put off what will be another manufacturer marque obsessed with corporate compliance, one likely to baulk at the idea of its 2026 cars hitting each other à la Ocon and Sergio Pérez at Force India, repeatedly.

Wherever Ocon ends up, he's long lost the career trajectory of a future champion. But signing elsewhere in F1's lower midfield would at least keep his story alive. And it's one that is truly compelling.

Ocon is one of a handful of modern F1 drivers to make it to the top level from very humble origins – his family sold their house to fund his karting career. Eventually, he was picked up by Mercedes as a

junior and some friendly wrangling between Toto Wolff and Fréd Vasseur meant a place at the latter's ART Grand Prix squad. The 2015 GP3 title followed his 2014 European F3 triumph ahead of Max Verstappen and soon an F1 berth with Manor appeared.

The clear parallel with Ocon's rise is that of Lewis Hamilton. But the seven-time world champion has a reputation for clean racing Ocon just doesn't. Forget pithy points about those 2021 crashes with Verstappen, where Hamilton only gave as good as he got and backed out of much more contact, incidents such as Ocon's pitwall chop on the Mercedes racer in the 2022 Monaco rain just aren't part of Hamilton's arsenal. And, ultimately, Ocon's benefactor never came calling for promotion to the big time.

The directness Ocon acknowledges he deploys within teams isn't unique – ruthlessness is essential for any sports star. But if he's deploying it elsewhere in F1 in 2025, at least he can continue his efforts to reward his family for their considerable sacrifices a decade and more ago. His father closed his garage to outside clients at his son's urging in 2022 and should rightly be proud of his efforts and achievements.

Just remember Ocon's story the next time a nepo/trust fund baby enters the F1 fray already packed with them. It's scrappy, but important in F1's supposed meritocracy.

OCON IS ONE OF A HANDFUL OF MODERN F1 DRIVERS TO MAKE IT TO THE TOP LEVEL FROM VERY HUMBLE ORIGINS



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The Streamliner

by H. Moser & Cie.

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RM 30-01

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Oversize date
Power-reserve indicator and function selector
Case in grade 5 titanium

A Racing Machine On The Wrist